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**An American Mother, &
Other Stories, By Mary
Lanman Underwood.**

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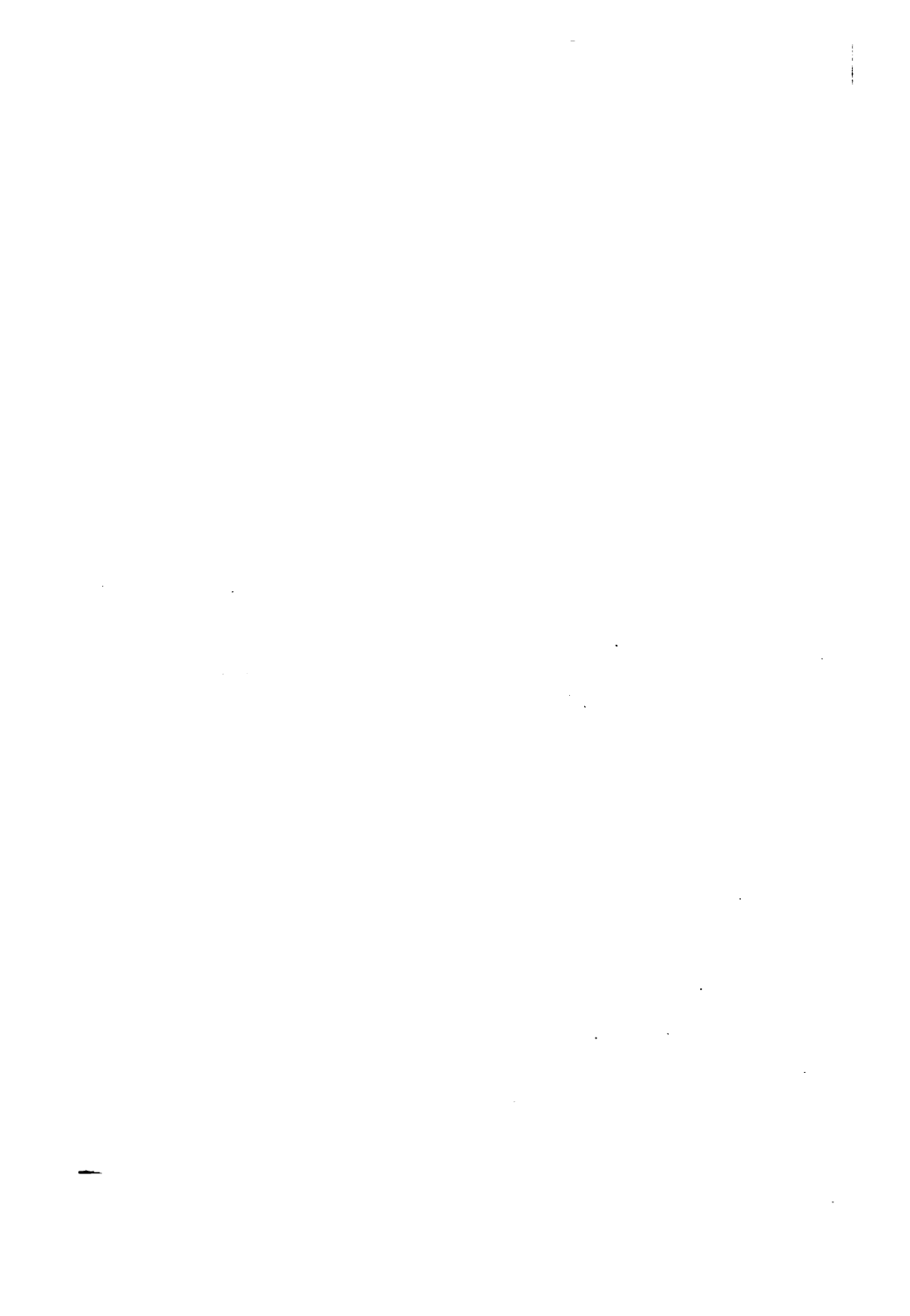
PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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An American Mother

I T seems an extreme means."

Mrs. Cannon withdrew her eyes from contemplation of the ocean that rolled in at the foot of the lawn and turned them slowly on the speaker.

"From what you say it is a case that calls for extreme means."

"I did not intend to alarm you unnecessarily."

"Any mother would be alarmed, I am sure."

She leaned her dark head against the red cushion of the piazza chair as she spoke, and met his troubled look with one of mingled resolution and defiance.

"It is useless to talk about my influence over him," she went on, quickly. "Of course I know, I hope I have had influence in making him what he is—but he is a man now. You

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cannot expect me, Randolph, to ask him to give up caring for this girl as a sacrifice to his feeling for me; that would put me in the wrong in the beginning."

The man made no immediate reply. He sat, a genially dignified figure in his severe morning clothes, his gaze fixed abstractedly on a sail dipping against the distant blue of the horizon.

"You must not magnify this, Bertha," he said, cheerfully, at last. "Infatuation in a boy of twenty-one for a girl of her type is one of the commonest things. The chances are ten to one that he will come out of it without having committed himself; it was just that tenth chance I wanted to guard against in Hamilton's case."

Mrs. Cannon shook her head, undeceived by the sudden confidence of his tone.

"Don't try to encourage me with generalities," she said. "How are we to know that he will not commit himself to-day. You say that he is constantly seen with her—that people are wondering if it will come to anything."

"That Ida Jewett says people are wondering," he corrected her.

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"After all, if she were some girl of obscure respectability whom he had glorified, I should not mind so much," she continued, "but what is hardest to endure is that he can be blind to Miss McDonnell's posing. I should have thought he would be the first to see how different she is from the girls with whom he has been brought up."

"That is just it, my dear Bertha—the novelty."

"It is true," she admitted, fairly, "the girl may have attractive qualities under her ordinary manners; but that is just the point. Even if I go to Hamilton, as you suggest, there is nothing I can say to him save, 'I hear you are attentive to a girl who is not quite well-bred.' And he will reply, with perfect justice, that I do not know her and am not in a position to judge."

She leaned forward in her earnestness, her slender hands with their fine jewels clasping the arms of the chair.

"I have always dreaded appearing to make an affectation of it," she said, a little tremulously, "but you know, Randolph, that, in spite of all my other interests, my real life has centered in Hamilton always. It has

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seemed to me lately that he had grown up to be all I could desire in so many ways—and now, if his first act of independence should be to throw himself away in such a marriage—oh, I cannot, cannot bear it.”

She covered her eyes for a moment, turning her head away; and he remained silent from a man's awkwardness at sight of tears. It was years since he had seen her other than the distinguished, self-possessed woman of the world. He felt suddenly carried back to the time when, a charming, ambitious girl, she had married his jovial friend and he had stood helplessly by watching her, at first unsatisfied, finally disillusioned and suffering. He made a motion now as if to touch one of her hands, and then checked himself abruptly; the color rose in his smooth-shaven face.

“You must not take it so hard,” he faltered.

“I suppose,” she protested, “if I had brought him up to obey my wishes unquestioningly, I might be able to speak to him now as you wish. But always, ever since he was a baby, I have tried to make him see the reason of things; I have wanted him to think out for himself what was right and what was wrong.

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I have never believed that a child should consider his parents infallible—it does n't seem reasonable. What I have wanted is that Hamilton should understand that he and I are under the same laws of right and wrong, and that I am his superior only in experience. I always left him perfectly free at college, and I think he came through with as few things to regret as most boys. Of course I am glad to think that my opinion strengthened his good resolutions."

"You need not justify yourself," he said, "he is a straightforward and honorable fellow, and his mind works as clearly as a man's on most points. He is like the men of your family."

"Do you think so?" she exclaimed, eagerly, and then flushed, annoyed at having betrayed her dread of another inheritance.

"All that you have said confirms me in my first judgment," she hastened to divert him.

Without replying he rose and took up his hat and stick, which were lying on the wicker divan near by.

"Then I am afraid I have only made a bad matter worse," he said, frankly; "but at all

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events the time has passed for imposing my guardian's authority, if ever I had any."

"You are always most kind, most good." She extended her hand without rising. "If I find that you can help me, I will send for you; and if I fail I will admit that you told me so."

When the last sounds of the buckboard wheels on the gravel drive had ceased, she stood up, and resting her hands on the piazza-rail, gazed wistfully out to sea. Presently she turned, and stepping with an air of intention, entered the house.

In the hall the butler was able to tell her that Mr. Cannon was reading in the billiard-room. The young man, absorbed in his newspaper, did not see her until she spoke; then he hastily removed his feet from the opposite chair and straightened out of his lounging position. Mrs. Cannon, going over, sat down on the window-seat beside him.

The resemblance between them, without being physically striking, was real. Although he had not fully outgrown the easy slouch which stands young fellows in place of entire self-possession, there was much of his mother's free and simple poise about him. His lean, muscular figure betokened plenty of

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vigor; his face was open and frank. He wore his dark and shining hair parted in the middle over his high forehead; and prominent cheek-bones and a somewhat long chin added to the extreme masculinity of his expression.

"Jackson said that Mr. Van Alden was with you," he remarked, as she settled some cushions behind her. "I thought that I wouldn't intrude."

"I didn't send for you," she explained, "because we were talking about you."

"Such a new subject for you two," he laughed.

"But this time it was business."

He sobered at once, becoming boyishly eager.

"You mean about the rail-roading?" he asked. "You told him that I wish to go into it?"

She leaned forward and laid her hand gently on his arm; the action was full of sympathy.

"I told him everything," she replied, "and he thinks it an excellent choice for you. He said at once that he would be glad to put you in the way of something on his own road, provided you were willing to begin at the beginning."

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The young man raised his eyebrows with an exaggerated gesture of dissent.

"I know what Van Alden's 'beginning' means," he said. "Overalls."

"If you do not care to take it, I will make your allowance sufficient," she replied quickly. Her tone was studiously careless, but a gleam of anxiety betrayed itself in her eyes.

He sat silent for a few moments after she had spoken, idly pulling the wool on the back of the poodle which had wandered up.

"You are awfully good, mother," he said, finally, rousing himself; "but of course there is n't any question of my not taking this chance. I am in luck to get it, and I want to begin at the beginning and show what stuff I'm made of, if I can. Only I was thinking—" he paused and glanced up at her in awkward confusion. Suddenly his face became suffused with a tender pink that even the summer tan did not hide. "I was thinking that perhaps I had better say now that, if—if I should ever have a family, then I should be grateful for your generosity."

The last words were blurted out bashfully, with averted eyes, or he must have seen her start of dismay. In his embarrassment,

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however, he did not even notice the long pause following, or that once or twice she opened her lips as if to speak and then closed them again.

"I hope that I may always have plenty for us all," she said, at last, rising. "We will talk of this again soon."

As she passed swiftly up the curving staircase out of his sight, she was conscious that her hands had grown very cold and that her lips were trembling."

"It is worse than I had thought," she whispered to herself.

Late that afternoon Mrs. Cannon came down for her drive, smiling, and looking younger than ever in her light costume. She made a pretty show of pleasure at the sight of her son, who stood at the top of the piazza steps carefully inspecting the horses.

"You will come with me?" she asked. "Do, the truth is I want to consult with you. It is about the people we are to have next week," she explained, when he had accepted her invitation and they were rolling over the raked gravel out to the dusty highroad. "I cannot remember whether I told you that Anna Phelps is coming or not. Her mother

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is abroad, you know, and she is staying at Marion with her grandmother, so I thought a few days of Narragansett would break the monotony. Then there is your friend Lauriston, and if we keep it a *partie carree* we seem to be a girl short. Can't you suggest someone? It is the Sunday I want most to provide for," she resumed, as he hesitated. "It is hardly worth while getting anyone from a distance for so short a time, but if you could think of some nice girl who is staying at the Pier, whom we could ask down—you see I have been about so little this year that I have lost track of who is here."

She paused and looked at the young man expectantly. He appeared to be turning over what she had said in his mind.

"There is one girl," he volunteered, presently. "A Miss McDonnell—but you do not know her people." He colored in spite of his effort to look unconscious.

"Miss McDonnell?" She repeated the name with just the shade of vague interest which the conversation demanded. "I think that I have seen you with her at the Casino. A rather conspicuous blonde? Well, if you are sure that she will be the right person, why should n't

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I call on her mother—she has a mother, I suppose. We might go to-day, and then I could send the invitation in the morning.”

“They are staying at the — House,” he demurred. She fancied that he already regretted the impulse to which he had given way.

“If you will tell James the direction,” she said, “there will be just time.”

On the evening that followed the assembling of her little house party, Mrs. Cannon’s guests were, with one exception, gathered in the reception-room a prompt five minutes before her dinner-hour. Anna Phelps, who had travelled down from Boston since noon, stood slender and cool in her white gown, talking to Lauriston. Soft wisps of light, uncurled hair fell carelessly about her serene face, and the delicate pink rose and fell in her cheeks as she listened and responded. Mrs. Cannon, on the other side of the room, chatted pleasantly of the season’s topics to a third man who had been asked for the evening, and Hamilton, included in neither conversation, turned his eyes restlessly back and forth between the clock and his mother. It was a quarter of an hour past the appointed time when his anxious

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ear caught the first rustle of silk, but in an instant Mrs. Cannon had heard it too, and, advancing, prepared to meet the new-comer.

As the girl wavered for an instant on the threshold, the room seemed suddenly to have become very full. It was not so much her size, perhaps, as the strikingly artificial proportions of her figure—the wide hips and shoulders, the painfully belted-in waist—her whole aggressive carriage, which jarred so rudely on the quiet harmony of the company. As Mrs. Cannon held her hand while she went through with the brief introduction, the girl stared curiously. Her eyes were blue and naturally prominent, with arched eyebrows. The lovely curling of her golden hair lost from being twisted into an elaborate form, and the red lips of her small mouth puckered in what seemed an habitual expression of discontent. She had no opportunity to do more than bow generally before dinner was announced.

At the table it was evident to the elder woman's alert observation that the girl was quite unaccustomed to the quiet elegance of all the appointments. She sat rather rigidly in her chair with her elbows at a sharp angle, and Mrs. Cannon detected a furtive glance in

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her direction before she ventured to take up the oyster-fork beside her plate. After a few moments, however, it became apparent that the novelty of her position stimulated instead of awed her. She broke into the conversation with nervous volubility.

"I hope I did n't keep your dinner standing very long," she said, addressing Mrs. Cannon; she spoke very quickly and clipped her words at the ends. "The truth is, it was the fault of my new maid. Papa brought her up from New York night before last, and I guess we have n't got used to each other yet. She has the best recommendation, though, from one of the first families, but somehow she does n't seem to suit me. Now, to-night the more I hurried her the slower she got."

"Oh, they are all the people we live with," Anna Phelps agreed, pleasantly, across the table.

"Well, I say a servant should know her place," persisted the other girl, "and if she does n't know it she's got to be taught. As my father says, if you pay your money for their time it's yours. Now, next year at home I want to have a butler and a buttons both, and mother says they 'll fight, but I say

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they won't if they are only brought to terms in the first place."

"Oh, certainly," acquiesced Miss Phelps. She carefully refrained from meeting her hostess' glance, but her expression betrayed vague dismay.

Mrs. Cannon, smilingly attentive, saw the faintest shadow of annoyance gather on her son's face as he hastened to divert Miss McDonnell's attention into a less conspicuous conversation with himself. In that moment the memory of Van Alden and his warning came to her, and the pulses in her body seemed to stop for an instant, as she realized in this first signal of success the extent of the risk she had taken.

During the three days that followed Mrs. Cannon used every occasion as an opportunity to give Miss McDonnell precedence. At her hostess' request the girl monopolized the piano, her untrained voice filling the room with its loud, throaty notes. She chose popular airs, sung with a generous accompaniment of the loud pedal, until young Cannon, who had heard the best music from his early childhood, began to wonder irritably what could induce his mother to renew the invita-

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tion every evening. On their drives and excursions, too, she was always placed by his side, and her shallow, constantly recurring laugh came after awhile to fill his ears with no effect save that of weariness.

Mrs. Cannon, unable to trust the reassurance of her son's manner, had brought the young people out on the piazza to spend their last evening. Now that the game seemed so nearly at an end, she was seized with a sudden, wretched uncertainty. What if Hamilton's apparent moodiness, as he lounged against the railing, were in reality some deeper feeling. Young Lauriston and Anna Phelps had drawn somewhat apart, and the low murmur of their voices reached the others without meaning. Mrs. Cannon, as she glanced from her son to Miss McDonnell, showily pretty, with the moonlight streaming on her white shoulders, felt a sudden desire to act—to end her uncertainty in one way or the other at once.

She turned to her son :

"Have you shown Miss McDonnell our Spouting Rock?" she said. "It ought to be fine to-night."

Hamilton roused himself with something like a shake.

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"Will you come?" he said; and his mother could not help being sure of the indifference of his tone.

The young couple went down the steps and across the lawn. As soon as they were fairly away from the house, the girl dropped her assumed air and spoke out quite naturally.

"There!" she said, "this is the first time I've seen you alone since I came. Now, for goodness sake, do tell me what is the matter with you to-day; are you mad?"

"Mad? Vexed, do you mean? No."

"Then what makes you so different?"

"I did n't know that I was different." In spite of himself he sounded curt. "There is the Spouting Rock," he hastened to add.

"You are different," she averred, disregarding his interruption. "You know that you are different."

Hamilton had halted and was standing with his figure turned partly away from her.

"Am I?" he replied, carelessly. "You ought to see the Rock on a windy day; then it is really worth while."

The girl's face flamed up. "I knew you were mad," she declared.

"No, I assure you I am not."

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His calm civility seemed to confuse her. She faced about with a quick gesture.

"Let's go back," she said, shortly.

He fancied, with impatient shame, that there were tears of mortification in her voice. It crossed his mind that his mother had really made a mistake in encouraging her by an invitation to the house.

When Van Alden received a note from Mrs. Cannon on the following morning, he pondered over it a good ten minutes in irritated perplexity. It was like a woman, he asserted testily, to throw out mysterious hints over nothing; but although he was bound to a stag dinner that evening, it did not prevent his replying by the messenger that it would give him the greatest pleasure to dine with her. Then he went into the library and wrote a pacifying letter to his host, in which the demands of family friends who were in deep trouble stood out convincingly.

He was not, therefore, wholly prepared for the quiet self-satisfaction with which his hostess came down to meet him.

"You have something to tell me?" he asked.

"Better than that," she replied, her eyes shining; "I have nothing to tell you."

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That night, when she had left the two men over their cigars, the talk came back naturally to Hamilton's prospects.

"The place is ready for you whenever you care to go," said the elder man.

"And I should like to go at once," Hamilton cried. He stretched out his arms as if the future were something he would pick up bodily.

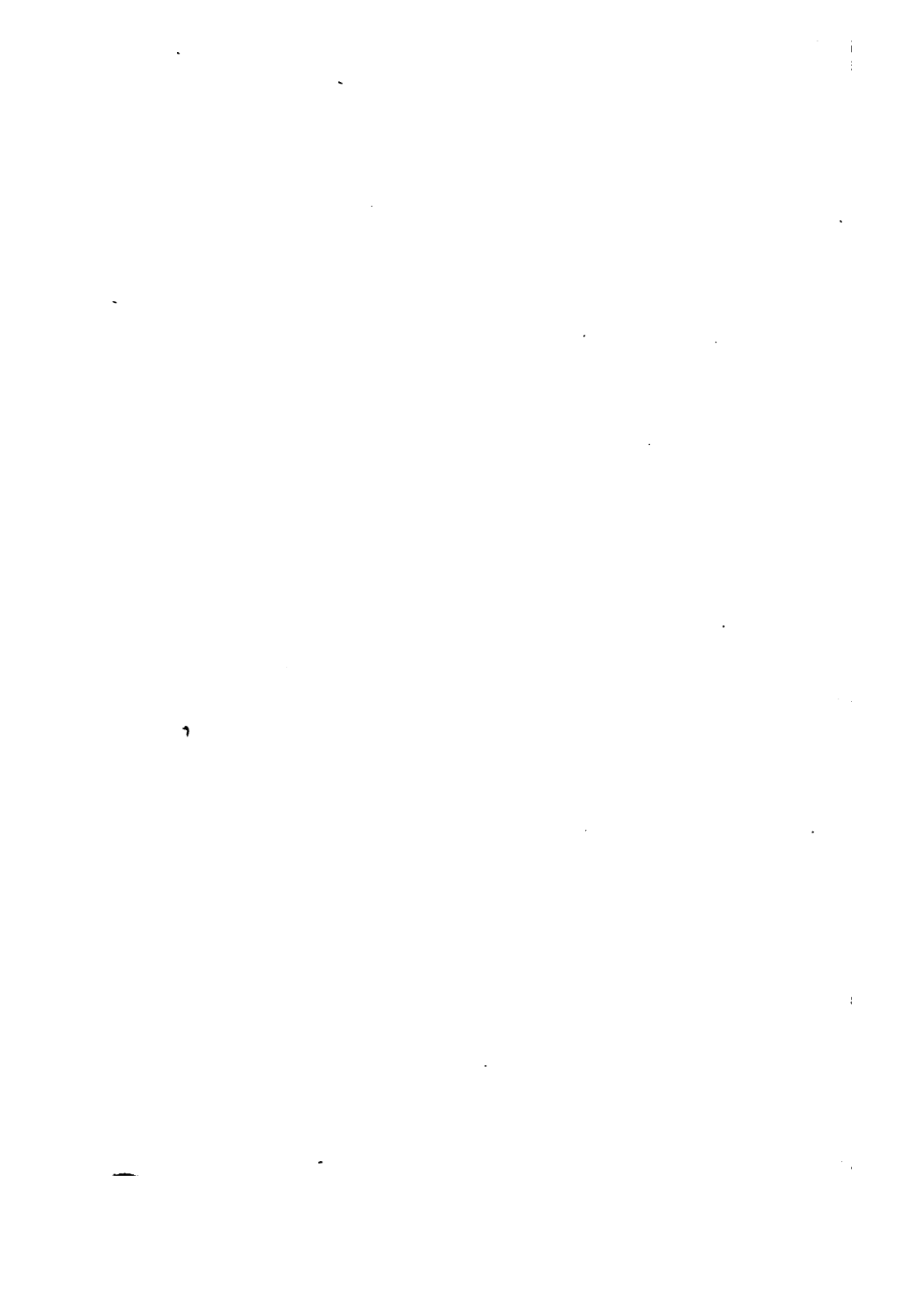
Van Alden regarded him with a flush of admiration.

"I wonder if you half appreciate your mother," he said, impulsively.

"I have always thought I did, sir."

"Thought! Oh, my dear boy, when you are forty and look back you will know."

THE BABY'S INHERITANCE



The Baby's Inheritance

“**I** DO, *do* love you!” she said. She put one hand on each of his shoulders, and threw back her head with the exuberant happiness of a child first possessed of a new toy.

It was the last day of their wedding trip, and, in order to give vent to this outburst, Elsa had stopped in the business of filling two large trunks with costumes and parts of costumes, which she picked up haphazard from several piles lying about on the chairs. The novelty of wearing these new gowns and being called by her married name had not yet worn off, although it was now three weeks since she walked up the middle aisle of Grace Church leaning on Uncle Bradley-Brimmer's arm, with the point lace veil of Aunt Bradley-Brimmer modestly covering her head. As a

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topic of conversation, the "brilliant occasion of her marriage," to quote the newspapers, had as yet all its first interest; and from a daily revival of the details of the affair she had come to regard it, in the main, as gratifying. She also admitted to herself that in entertaining her for three months, in giving her a complete outfit, and sending cards to their own friends for an elaborate wedding breakfast, the Bradley-Brimmers had made the most of their privileges as rich relations; and Elsa was not in the habit of underestimating these privileges. Further, she dwelt with satisfaction on the fact that certain distant members of the family who of late had let the relationship grow vague had been inspired by the example of the Bradley-Brimmers to define it again with several handsome gifts.

But in spite of these recollections, she referred now and then regretfully to the expectation she had held of having her marriage take place in Berlin.

This was not so much because her parents lived there all the year round [save for a little economical summering at Weimar,] and were unable to afford a trip to New York, with its attendant expense, as on account of

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her mother's brother. This uncle's position as American Minister at the German Court had given her a social place for which, to use her own words, Aunt Bradley-Brimmer's second-hand calling-list was a poor substitute. But Aunt Bradley-Brimmer had written that if she were going to live in New York, she must come over and be properly introduced. On the other hand, Uncle Thomas, when he had heard of the date of her marriage, had brought her a pendant of rather small pearls, with his good wishes, but never a hint of a wedding breakfast, nor, in fact, so much as a pair of silk stockings toward the trousseau. There had been, indeed, no choice.

After her little love speech, Chapin took both Elsa's hands into his, and drew her down beside him on the couch.

"Never mind the clothes," he said. "There is time enough. We are going home. Let us talk it over a bit."

Elsa settled herself against his arm comfortably. She had on a loose matinee of white India silk. Her fair fine hair tumbled itself picturesquely against his dark coat. Chapin looked down on her tenderly, and smoothed her cheek before he went on.

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"Home! Just think how much that means to us, dear! Oh, I hope you are going to be happy! I hope you won't miss anything out of your old life."

The girl's expression sobered. "New York is—well, naturally, it is n't like Paris, or even Berlin. I have been meaning to say to you, Harold, that if you had asked me about it, I certainly shouldn't have advised taking an apartment; that is, not an American apartment. I may be sensitive, but I have hardly ever been into one that I didn't detect in it the odor of cooking."

"My mother thought the housekeeping would be so much less of a burden for you. I'm sorry I didn't ask you; but you were so much occupied, and going out all the time. Besides, a house in a location as desirable as our apartment would be out of the question on my income."

"I have never liked apartments," she insisted. "Perhaps I can get accustomed to one. But you must admit that there isn't much difference between one and a tenement house."

Chapin made no reply, and after a pause she slipped out of his embrace, which had

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grown loose, and went back to the packing. Presently she turned her face across her shoulder toward him as she knelt on the floor.

"I didn't know there would be any trouble about money."

"I have very nearly ten thousand dollars a year," Chapin answered, shortly. "A physician's income always fluctuates more or less, but with my investments I can count pretty safely on ten thousand."

"And isn't that a good deal? "

"In New York it is nothing. If you try to compete it is worse than nothing. I made sure you understood this, Elsa."

"There has always seemed enough."

"You mean that I have given you a few gifts, but that is nothing; that is not like keeping up an establishment and entertaining. You see, dear, you have never managed a house. You will be surprised."

Elsa shook her head skeptically. "Your clubs are expensive, I suppose. Otherwise I don't see where it could go to. Why, take Ada Vanderpool. Fred only allows her two thousand a year for herself, and you see how she dresses—real sable on her dinner gowns.

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And that would leave eight thousand for all the rest."

Chapin walked across the room without replying. Elsa, having tucked in the last wad of lace, stood up, with a swift change of mood.

"There! it is done. Kiss me."

Chapin faced about, and bent over her mechanically.

"Now, Harold, that did n't mean anything. You are absent-minded again. Oh dear, they say a woman is always disappointed when she finds her lover is only her husband! But I warn you that I want to be loved with enthusiasm, as the foreigners love. Not that they love so much after marriage, perhaps. The baron was enthusiastic enough. You must remember, Harold, that I might have been a baroness now if Uncle Thomas had n't been so disagreeable about settlements; and I his only niece, too; but— Where are you going?"

Chapin had taken up his hat.

"I think," he said, "I will go down stairs and see about having the trunks checked direct from the hotel."

When the Chapins were once fairly settled, Harold found, to his relief, that his wife's aversion to apartments had arisen from caprice

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rather than conviction. She had a fine instinct for artistic effect, without the ability to produce it; and the little drawing-room, with its dull green hangings, walls covered by water-colors, broad window-seats filled with soft cushions, and quaint antiques in chairs and tables [all of which had been the care of Chapin's mother,] suited her taste to perfection.

Chapin often hurried home early on Friday, which was her reception day, in order to see her in one of the tea gowns of Mrs. Bradley-Brimmer's generosity, radiantly making tea for his own and Mrs. Bradley-Brimmer's friends, who hastened, either from curiosity or kindness, to visit the bride. For a while Elsa was completely happy in the stimulation of these small social triumphs, together with a number of dinners and an occasional ball to which they were invited. But after a time, when invitations came less frequently, and the falling off at the "at homes" became perceptible, Chapin noticed that the atmosphere of the house was also changing. Elsa herself always managed to be exquisitely dressed, but the rooms began to take on an ill-kept look. Whenever he opened a window,

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if his coat brushed the sill it was almost certain to be covered with dust. If a straggling caller or two came in on Friday afternoon, no effort was made now to serve tea. After a few weeks Elsa had some debate with the quiet waitress [her mother-in-law's choice], and the maid was replaced by a heavy-stepping young woman, whose ample figure seemed always crowding itself between some two pieces of dainty furniture. Dinner degenerated into a halting affair, helped through by loud-voiced conversation between the mistress at the head of the table and the maid behind the screen in the butler's pantry. Once or twice Chapin attempted some effective expostulation, but Elsa only stared, and promptly reverting to her old grievance, asserted that it was impossible to be "nice" in a flat. Finally, Chapin, losing tact in his desperation, went to his mother, and entreated her to give his wife a few practical suggestions. But Mrs. Chapin, wise in her knowledge of human nature, only shook her head and stroked her son's dark hair, with all her mother love in her finger-tips. There was no advice like that of experience, she said, and Harold had best go home and tell Elsa definitely what he

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expected. She thought that perhaps if Elsa had an allowance, and was guided occasionally in using it, they might be more comfortable.

Chapin disliked the look and sound of money as money, and he disliked most of all to put any restriction on his wife concerning it. He ended, however, in trying to follow out his mother's suggestion. His proposition showed to Elsa that he was willing to share in the responsibility of housekeeping, and she immediately shifted the greater part of her cares upon his shoulders.

The real domestic crisis came one evening when Chapin hurried in late for dinner, and found Elsa, with burning cheeks and blazing eyes, facing the cook, who was, as she put it, "airin' her mind." Both paused when he entered, and both began again before he could speak. It was evident that Elsa had completely forgotten her dignity, and was making no effort for self-control.

"This insolent creature—this fool—" she began.

Here the cook broke in, and drowned her voice: "I beg yez'll excuse me, sir, but I was n't hired for no fancy fixin's; they aint in me recommend. I'm a good cook, and I cook

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good, if I do say it, and no person as was a lady would speak like this to a poor woman; no person, I say—”

Chapin put up his hand and silenced her peremptorily. Then he led Elsa into the library, and finally gathered from her that, the waitress being out, she had ordered cook to bring sandwiches and tea into the parlor for some guest. “And she brought,” said Elsa, “hunks of bread an inch thick, with great patches of butter. It was Mrs. Goodhue. I nearly died of mortification.”

Chapin went out and paid the woman a week's wages in advance, asking her to leave at once, and send back for her trunk. His own face felt hot, and he could hardly bear to let her go from under his roof without some apology. When he told Elsa what he had done she showed signs of a fresh outburst of passion.

“You have let her go?” she cried. “You have let—her—go! Why, I did n't mean to have her go. I should have said I was sorry—anything—to have kept her. There are all those people coming to dinner to-morrow night!”

“I presume we can order something

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from outside," said her husband, wearily.

She meditated for a moment, her face, lighting, until it broke into a pretty smile.

"How stupid of me not to have thought of it before! It would have been so much simpler to have ordered from Sherry's in the first place."

"Couldn't we go to somebody less pretentious? It is only for intimate friends, after all."

She got up, and running over to his chair, caught his face coquettishly between her two hands. "You dear old darling! As you say, this isn't in your sphere. You ought not to be worried with it; don't think of it again. The dinner shall be charming; you will be proud of it."

It is true that the next evening the eight guests gathered about her oval table, covered with heavy silver and cut glass, spoke among themselves of the excellence of everything as course after course of forced and rare delicacies was served. Chapin paid the bill a couple of weeks later with a hopeless sort of feeling that it was of no use to protest. It amounted, with service, and without wines, to the exact

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sum received by him that day for a critical operation which had saved the life of a trained nurse, whose aid to the very poor often touched his own heart. He seldom mentioned this work to his wife; it made her nervous about contagious diseases.

In spite of these increasing troubles, Chapin was not wholly unhappy. A man of his sturdy way of living is not disillusioned in a day or a month, or perhaps a year. And the mere hope of having a child of his own quite offset his discomfort.

Elsa shared this anticipation with him, though in a somewhat different spirit. The accumulation of a layette was to her the chief, because the immediate, pleasure. That taste for dainty dressing which marked her own wardrobe found fresh fields in the collecting of baby things. Chapin was absurdly generous, and she indulged in Dresden china powder and soap boxes, an elaborate bassinet—in short, every luxury that the shops offered. During this time, too, her acquaintances visited her more, and many of them, in marked friendliness, sent her pretty tokens of good wishes. She became better-natured, more ambitious, and Chapin began to cherish a new

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faith that in the future their home life might be more like his dreams.

As if by perversity of fate, the baby proved to be a boy. Elsa had wanted a girl. She had prepared for a girl. Everything in the layette was in pink. When they first told her that she had a son, she turned on her pillow and sobbed long and passionately. It was the unrestrained grief of a disappointed child. After that her feeling for the boy was an uncertain and mild interest. If he had first been bathed and made fresh in his fineries, it was sometimes her pleasure to hold him for half an hour. But his crying made her irritable. When she was able to go out once more, she would put on her wraps at the first whimper, and hurry off to lunch with some friend, remaining frequently through the entire afternoon. The trained nurse had been retained for two months, but at the end of that time she was obliged to leave. Chapin stood stern and quiet, with the baby nestling in his arms, when the hour came for her to go.

"Do you think he is very delicate?" he appealed to her, for the fiftieth time. He spoke in the deprecatory tone of one who knew the futility of the question.

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She replied as cheerfully as if she had never heard it before. "Not so very delicate; all he needs is care—good care."

After her departure there were some demands which Elsa could not wholly avoid. While the regular nurse was at her meals, and on an occasional Sunday afternoon, it was necessary for her to sit with the child. Fortunately he often slept; but when she was called upon to do more than watch him, she almost invariably burst upon Chapin afterward in a paroxysm of reproach. She was pitifully awkward in handling him, and it sometimes seemed to her husband that the child resented his mother's touch, he was so apt to grow restless and fretful under it. Chapin, on the contrary, handled him with a gentleness that would have been womanly without its strength. But whenever he ventured to hint that Elsa should imitate him, she lapsed instantly into the old mood of complaint. She was not the woman to have children, she would say. Plainer women, with no nerves and no ambitions, and nothing else they wanted to do more, had better be mothers. For her part, she was bored to death with the eternal monotony of domestic

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talk and domestic life. She wanted to go back to Germany and appear again at court, and be a trifle less middle class in her occupations. Chapin winced under her taunts more than he cared to acknowledge even to himself. He would gladly have engaged a second nurse, but the point had now been reached where he was obliged to consider the expense. Moreover, night after night he sat with the baby himself, bending hungrily over the tiny lean form that, in spite of the nurse's happy prophecy, had gained painfully little upon its first light weight. The weighing of the baby on each Sunday afternoon was, in fact, the most important proceeding of the week to him. When, carefully suspended in a napkin, the child tipped the scales at a quarter of a pound more than the week before, Chapin would shout with the joy of a school-boy. Elsa sympathized neither in the joy nor its cause. She regarded the whole performance as a "trying operation" to witness, and after the first two or three times, absented herself from the room while it went on.

It was when the baby had entered upon its fourth month that Chapin came home one day at an unaccustomed hour. The moment

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the door was open he felt that something strange and wrong had happened. He did not need have a maid rush forward, utterly incoherent from excitement, and motion him toward the nursery. The nursery was not a very cheerful room; the one window in it opened on a dark court. To-day, however, a single ray of sunshine had pierced its depth, and fell directly across the bed, where the baby lay gasping for breath. Now and then he made a pitiful moaning sound, and the fingers of one diminutive hand rubbed and twisted against each other constantly. Chapin gave him a single practiced glance and touched the restful hand; it was very cold. He left the room for an instant, and returned with a stimulant. Then he wrote two telephone messages, and gave them to the maid; one was to a brother physician, the other an immediate demand on a hospital for a nurse. When these had been sent, he sat by the bed and ministered to his son without a word.

It did not occur to him, until he heard a bell ring, to inquire where the child's mother might be. The maid replied that she had gone to drive in the Park with some friend;

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she had probably come now. But it proved to be the doctor.

Chapin raised the suffering, pinched body in his arms, and held it out toward the other man as he entered. "I can't think at all," he whispered, hoarsely; "I can't think. Oh, my God, Janvier, save him for me!"

As it chanced, Mrs. Chapin and the trained nurse came up in the elevator together twenty minutes later. After a word with the woman who answered the bell, Elsa rushed excitedly into the nursery.

"What is it? What does it mean?" she began; but paused, warned by Janvier's up-raised hand. He came forward, and led her quietly out of the room.

"The baby is better," he said. "Come in here until your husband can join us."

The trained nurse took her post almost directly, and very soon Chapin followed his wife into the library. Dr. Janvier had gone, and she was crying.

"I should think," she exclaimed, "if my baby is going to die, I might at least see it."

Chapin sat down beside her, and began to speak in the monotonous voice of a child reciting a lesson.

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"He is asleep now. We have relieved him. You could do nothing. He has had a sharp attack. His nurse was out, I find, and you were out." He raised his eyes for the first time. "It was brought on by exposure. He was left asleep before an open window with no one to watch him."

Elsa stopped short in her spasmodic sobbing.

"What are you saying?" she cried, indignantly. "Exposed! Nonsense. You know it was nothing of the sort. I opened that window myself before I went out. You know fresh air is good for babies: you have said so. And it is very warm; I wore no furs."

"Please speak a little lower; you will disturb him."

"I don't care if I do disturb him. It is like you to blame me; you blame me for everything. You would be glad to keep me cooped up here every moment. Aren't my life and pleasure of some importance? I should think there had never been a baby in the world before." She had reached the climax of her passion. "I don't care!" she flung out; "I don't care if he does die."

For the next three or four days the young

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life flickered. A severe northeast storm which set in and continued steadily made the rooms seem chill and dismal. Elsa seldom entered the sick-room, but occupied herself either in writing graceful little notes, telling about her "sad trouble," or in reading novels. Her husband spoke to her only in the presence of the servants, in order to keep up a proper appearance before them. She sulked and cajoled him in vain, until on the afternoon of the fourth day, when she determinedly intercepted him in the hall. She held an envelope in her hand.

"Is the baby going to die?" she inquired.

"I don't know; his lungs are very bad," he replied, and went out.

But that night, at dinner, she renewed the conversation in the presence of the waitress.

"If the baby should die, Harold, you wouldn't expect me to wear black, would you? I think it is very affected to pretend great grief for a little thing that has n't had even intelligence enough to know you were its mother. Anyway, that sort of thing is going out now among the best people. Only the people who aren't quite good form wear crape lately

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Don't you think, if anything should happen, it would be better taste to go on just as usual without any change?" Her husband sat grimly silent, and she glanced across at him with an aggrieved expression. "By-the-way," she added, as if suddenly remembering, "the Bradley-Brimmers are going abroad again, and they give a big farewell dinner week after next. Our invitations came this morning."

As the balmy weather came, the baby grew steadily stronger. By the date of the dinner, Elsa might almost have forgotten his illness had it not been for the strange nurse in the house, and the feeling between her husband and herself. She had accepted the Bradley-Brimmers' invitation on her own responsibility, and once more she ventured to question Chapin about going.

He did not reply directly, but following her into the library, closed both the folding doors, and came and stood before her with his arms crossed.

"I've got something very unpleasant to say, Elsa, and I want to say it so as to leave as little hard feeling between us as possible. I can see that your married life has n't been all that you hoped it might be. We've both had

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our disappointments, but there can't any good come from going into those. Most of them can't be changed. Now, Elsa, henceforth I am going to devote myself to trying to make you happy more in your own fashion. I have gone all over it in my mind. We will give up this apartment and live at a hotel. We will go out more. You shall have more excitement," he hesitated, almost imperceptibly. "In return, I wish to send the baby to my mother. She will take care of him, and give herself up to him, and be glad to."

Elsa could hardly wait until he had finished.

"Send the baby away from me, Harold? What an unnatural idea! I sha'n't listen to it. We can take him to a hotel perfectly well. People would say I didn't do my duty as a mother."

Chapin's face stiffened into determined lines.

"You have not done your duty," he said, sternly. "I don't want you to make me seem brutal, Elsa; but the boy's life has been saved almost by a miracle. I need n't tell you again how he came so near to losing it. I've done just as much now to give him life as you have,

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and I intend to protect him. Don't let us waste words over this. I intend to send him to my mother, where he will be properly cared for—cared for as he never has been."

"I won't listen to it."

"You must listen."

Elsa did not cry. She was roused beyond that. Her eyes shone. There were brilliant patches of red on her cheeks.

"Well, I think I agree with you," she said, after a moment, speaking with shrill rapidity, as if she were afraid that she might not be able to finish. "I have said to myself for a long while that I was wasted here. No, I am not modest. I appreciate myself, my accomplishments, my beauty; they are worth nothing to you. You don't care to hear me sing. You don't care to see me well dressed. You want kitchen-maid qualities in a woman, and I am perfectly willing that you should have them. Let your mother take the baby and bring him up in her own dull, prudish ways. He's more like you than he is like me, anyway. I don't care. I'll leave you both free. The Bradley-Brimmers are going abroad the first of the month, and I will go with them. There will be no scandal. I go

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to visit my mother ; you stay at home ; that is all."

Chapin had moved away, but he came back and stood before her again. He spoke with dignity, but his voice trembled slightly.

"Elsa, you are my wife. It isn't so very long ago that I promised before God to love and cherish you always. Dear, that did n't mean to-day, or a year from to-day. It did n't mean that if we found it hard to go on caring for each other we should give up trying in one year, or two. It means just this: that we must make the fulfilment of our promises to each other the supreme effort of our lives, so long as we both live."

Elsa moved uneasily.

"You always take this tone, Harold. I should think you would want to be rid of me if I did n't care for you. Of course, if you mean to hold me to the law, you can; but nowadays everybody is divorced, nobody thinks anything of it. Oh no; don't argue it all over again. Let your mother have him if you want to."

Chapin opened the door, and going into the hall, began to put on his overcoat. From where he stood they could see each other

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perfectly. Suddenly Elsa rose, and ran toward him. He turned, and half held out his hands, with a pleading gesture. She ignored the movement, but her face was once more full of pleasant animation.

"I almost forgot to remind you, Harold," she said, "not to be late for the dinner tonight. The Bradley-Brimmers make a point of punctuality."

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Agatha Sage

IT began with something like a coincidence. The club was never popular at this hour of the day, as Hunneman now recalled. He had strolled through the library and reading rooms, and, finding nobody to his particular liking, was turning to go away, when Eastwin ran up the steps. The two men met at the door and shook hands, and from this drifted back to the foot of the staircase. As they stood there talking, other men passed them, going in and out. These greeted Eastwin with a marked friendliness which did not include his companion. No one, however, who was watching Hunneman's passive face, with its lips drooping almost into a sneer, would have made the mistake of considering him slighted. Even to the casual observer it must have been obvious that he held himself voluntarily aloof. He did this, to be sure, with an

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air of habit rather than of intention, that was nevertheless quite as effective in isolating him. Even had he been responsive, this isolation must still have remained partial. He had little in common with the occupied business men who for the most part forgathered here. So far as congeniality of interests went, there was nothing to attract him to their club. In fact his membership had been in a measure compulsory, having come about because he shrank from seeming uncivil, and because the tact had failed him to decline insistently when an acquaintance proposed to him to join.

To-day he had been moved by a whim to come here. He was irritated and depressed, and, although attributing it to a late supper overnight, he had hoped that a sense of strangeness might divert him. With the other clubs to which he belonged the feeling was entirely different. He went to them as naturally as to his own home; they were a part of his inheritance.

Nevertheless he made no pretensions to being exceptionally sensitive. He did not go about like some of his friends saying that men of any other condition than his own jarred upon him. Without being in any vital way

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brought into contact with humanity at large, he was unaffectedly ignorant of either the necessity or the results of labor. The self-made man simply did not exist in his calculations. From the earliest association he had been reared among men who, he was told, by reason of their forefathers and the leisure opportunities of a large income, were gentlemen. He had never seen any reason to question either the justice or truth of this. At Harvard he had instinctively drawn away from men whom he would otherwise have been glad to know because they failed to have one or both of these qualifications for his friendship.

There was this difference between him and Eastwin from the first. Eastwin did not even recognize class distinctions. He liked a man for what he had in him. He was, of course, born to a class, but the force of his nature and his education had carried him away from it in the best sense. His youth had been uneventful and almost solitary. A small but prosperous clothing establishment absorbed most of his father's attention. His mother had been the daughter of an ill-recompensed country clergyman. Both parents lived the fullest and happiest part of their lives during

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the period when their son was setting honors against his name at Harvard, and later, when he was admitted to the bar. As for him, he never consciously outgrew their advice, and after they died he cherished the memory of their love and humble example with the simplicity of a child.

Yet few credited him with this side of his nature. Outwardly and in practical affairs he was considered keen and unyielding. Men valued his opinion of themselves: he made short work of them in words. Even his silence came to be regarded as critical rather than indifferent. But in the courts there were those who knew that he could be eloquent. At such times his superb vitality often gave to his argument a physical force which was alone commanding of attention. Under stress of excitement his gray eyes would deepen, his lips would narrow down, his wiry, well-made body would sway from side to side, as if by the attraction of his personality he expected to draw his hearers toward his point of view.

It was in this public capacity that Hunne-
man first made his acquaintance. Later they
dined at the same house—that of Hollis Sage.
Hollis Sage, while in all respects irreproach-

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able as a man of breeding and position, enjoyed a certain freedom in his associates. His laxness was easily set down to the excusable concession which an ambitious politician sometimes makes to convictions, whether social or otherwise. Eastwin's political influence was recognized as growing. Whatever he chose to write made a place for itself in the magazines and newspapers. Accordingly his intercourse with Hollis Sage had been on the latter's part, to some extent, the result of policy.

But with Hunneman there was no such self-interest at work. He made an effort to entertain Eastwin and to see something of him for very much the same reason that a child lingers about the door of a darkened room. Out of the fog of thirty-two years of idleness he was unable to comprehend what the other's conscientious, relentless energy meant.

After the first interest of meeting was over, Hunneman leaned back against the banisters listlessly. His eyes followed the servants as they crossed and recrossed the hall with an idle stare; and, although he replied to all of Eastwin's questions, it was with pre-

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occupied abruptness. Then all at once his face brightened.

"See here," he said, "you are just the man I want. Come with me and pay a visit to Miss Sage—a farewell visit: they start for Florida to-morrow."

Eastwin glanced down at his boots, which had lost their first lustre, and hesitated.

"I knew they were going, but I had not heard the exact date."

"To-morrow. Come, you have been there pretty steadily ; it is no more than civil."

The house stood half a dozen blocks north of the club. An intelligent looking maid hesitated for an instant before admitting them. Presently, however, she came back with the message that Mrs. Sage was out, but Miss Sage would be down soon.

The room into which the young men were shown was already dismantled in preparation for closing. Covers of striped linen had been put on the furniture, and even the pictures were shrouded in white cloths. All the ornaments had been locked away in cabinets. The chill of absence seemed already to have settled on the place.

Hunneman seated himself on the sofa

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with characteristic appropriation of the point of conversational vantage. The elder man took a chair well to the back of the room and so nearly hidden by a screen that when Miss Sage entered she failed for the moment to see him.

"Oh," she exclaimed, extending her hand, "I had begun to fancy there was a mistake about the card and that you were not here." She seated herself opposite Hunneman and continued: "Such an amusing thing happened lately. A man sent up his mother's card by mistake, and mamma was excused because of a headache, but she told Jane to say that she would come in and see about the baby slips for the Home in the morning. Fortunately for the man, Jane explained."

Both men laughed, but she shrugged her shoulders as if after all the incident had not been worth repeating.

Her face was of a type that is not altogether common among society women. Full of life, its quickly changing expressions were those of intelligence, with nothing of that mechanical vivacity which is so common to girls in their efforts to entertain men. Her

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poise and manner had indeed the ease and simplicity of a woman of the world. She possessed the faculty of wearing her gowns so that they became a part of herself. Her voice was low, having a husky note here and there, and she spoke with an impetuousness that had a certain musical charm for the ear. There was nothing discordant about her. Even her hands, with their slender, relaxed fingers, lay so composedly in her lap, that had her honesty not been obvious in other ways it might have appeared like careful posing. Her mind worked with ease. She carried the conversation along, touching casually on half a dozen topics and including both men. She apologized because there was no tea.

Eastwin, who had been in the habit of talking to her alone and very sensibly, began to find himself bewildered. He could not recall whether heretofore during his afternoon calls tea had been served or not. Oddly enough, until now he had never directly shared her attention with any one. Several times at dinners, and again at the theatre, it had happened to him to watch her from a distance, but whenever they were brought together he was in the habit, as he now realized,

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of monopolizing her. Finding this changed, he underwent a curious sensation that the girl herself was somehow not the same. All that indefinable familiarity which had existed between them was gone.

Gradually, as he made no effort to contribute his part, she and Hunneman settled down to an almost personal gossip about their mutual friends. If Eastwin had known any standard for behavior besides that which is dictated by kindness, he might have consoled himself with the reflection that this was unlike Agatha because ill-bred. But his humility was perfect. If she set him aside, he accepted it as unquestionably merited.

Hitherto his emotions had all been of the simplest kind,—a natural grief on the death of his parents, satisfaction over the success of his work, nothing, in short, to help him in divining the subtle meanings in a woman's moods.

His discomfort took the form of a sort of blank embarrassment. He wondered nervously whether the signs of this, his awkwardness and rising color, were apparent to Agatha. But she appeared to be completely occupied with Hunneman, assuring him, as he rose to

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go, that she would bring him a trained alligator with a string of silver bells round his neck. Hunneman insisted in turn that he should count on the alligator's knowing the skirt dance, and warned her to expect cards to an afternoon tea at his rooms, during which the alligator would be given an opportunity to perform. More laughter followed these feeble witticisms, amid which the young men bowed themselves out.

Eastwin's first impulse was to get away by himself, but Hunneman's mood proved social.

"I will walk down with you," he said. "I need exercise."

The twilight was just beginning to close in, and a rasping wind had blown up a scattered flurry of snow. Broughams and traps rolled briskly up the street, the spirited hackneys and cobs heading eagerly toward their comfortable stables. Occasionally Hunneman raised his hat to the occupant of one of these carriages, but without comment. They had gone a couple of blocks, when he broke the silence.

"If she were always as charming as she was to-day," he exclaimed out of his meditation, "I should n't try to resist her."

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Eastwin, who had been walking a little in advance, fell back, and gave him a sharp, startled look. The younger man, awakening to what he had said, laughed halfapologetically.

"Well, really I have thought of her a good deal," he went on, dropping his voice to a confidential key. "You are so positive about everything, I don't suppose you can sympathize with indecision in such a matter."

"What matter?" Eastwin inquired bluntly.

"Why, a matter of feeling. If you cared for a girl, your feelings would be very definite."

"Do you mean that you care for Miss Sage?"

"My dear fellow, how uncompromising you are! You remind me of the stern parent in the funny papers, who asks the young man his intentions. If I knew that I cared, would I hesitate? I will tell you, though, that I wanted you this afternoon to protect me. I felt capable of any folly."

"Folly!"

"Well, see here, Eastwin, marrying is a very important step, especially to a man of blood. I do not wish to say anything offensive,

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but that does make a difference. You cannot mix different kinds. All the women of our family have been of the best old stock; they are conservative—and exclusive. Miss Sage is just as well born, but somehow she isn't like them. To-day, as I said, she was conventional and charming; but sometimes you may have noticed she is not. She can be very self-assertive, and she has taken up with what I believe she considers a 'broad point of view.' Heaven knows I approve of patronizing charities and arts and all that; but when a woman as pretty as she is talks about finding her work in the world—you know yourself it is n't usual."

He paused, and Eastwin realized that he was expected to reply.

"Do you know what she means by her work?" he asked.

"Does she know herself? Anything, she says, so long as it amounts to something practical. She seems to have lost her head over people who do things. The other day, when my married sister was calling there, she met two queer women—women who earn their own living, designers, I believe. She said it was talked about quite freely, and Miss Sage

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seemed to think it was something to be envied. My sister said when she got home she sent flowers to all the hospitals, because they had made her feel so wickedly idle. Women are impressionable. Of course I don't mean to say that there is any particular discredit in work ; but why not leave it to the women who are born to it ? There must be gentlewomen, women who are beautiful and dainty and innocent, and who will make suitable wives. It seems to me that Miss Sage is lowering herself when she becomes interested in these common people."

"I am sure she does not agree with you."

"Oh, no, she does n't. She says that they stimulate each other. The secret of it is, she must be doing something. She told me once that it made her very unhappy if she could n't account to herself for her time as well spent."

Eastwin opened his lips as if to speak, and then closed them again.

"I do n't think I am in a position to appreciate the fine distinctions you make," he said finally, "but so far as I can judge you wrong Miss Sage in one regard. It does not seem to me that she undervalues either the

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desirability or the advantages of being well born any more than you do, only with her it brings a certain responsibility. Because she has inherited instincts of refinement, because her surroundings have been superior, because so far everything has in a sense been done for her, she feels that she has never proved herself. I remember one day, in speaking to her of her playing, she replied that she was a 'dim composite of other people's accomplishments.' It doesn't seem strange to me that she should want to make her own individuality as strong as possible."

"I think myself she is simply restless. If she were safely married she would drop these notions."

"What notions?"

"Of wanting to be something."

"Oh, no,—she is something already; all she asks is a chance to prove it."

"I see that she has been talking to you in the same strain." Hunneman spoke irritably. "For my part I do n't pretend to follow either of you. She is very popular, very gay; as I say, if she would only drop these notions she would n't be in any way different from other people."

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"Bless her notions," said the elder man under his breath.

"I wish she would; I do indeed," Hunneman repeated, referring to his own remark. After an instant he added, "Do you think she is a woman to be easily managed by the man she loves?"

He glanced up inquiringly as he spoke, but in the gathering dusk Eastwin's face was inscrutable. Hunneman struck absently with his cane at a pile of unmelted snow which had been shovelled to one side of the walk. It occurred to him that he had been mistaken in his companion, who was not, it proved, either good form or more than second-rate in his knowledge of women. Eastwin was a long while in replying.

"If I am to take it for granted that Miss Sage cares for you," he said at length,—“and I think that is what you intend me to gather,—I can only say that I am very sorry we got into this discussion. I understood that the personal part of it was wholly on your side. And I must say too”—dropping his quiet tone—“that I consider it a low thing which we have done—bandying the name of a woman who ought to be sacred to you, at least.”

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Hunneman faced about with a quick gesture of anger, and then, checking himself, shrugged his shoulders.

"You are old-fashioned," he said. "Is n't 'bandying' a strong word to apply to a harmless little chat?"

A few steps further brought them to the end of the street. Hunneman halted and motioned to the driver of a passing cab.

"I had better take this fellow; I have an early dinner engagement," he said.

Eastwin barely nodded, and without further ceremony plunged across into the Public Garden. The events of the afternoon had been too upsetting to admit of his thinking clearly. His main idea was to reach his office and there, secure from interruption, to go over all that had been said. It was, therefore, to his great annoyance that he found the place already occupied by a belated clerk. The young man raised his eyes and bowed respectfully to Eastwin, who, scarcely appearing to notice him, passed on into his private room.

After turning up the light and getting rid of his overcoat, he seated himself in one of his habitual attitudes, with his forehead supported by the palms of his hands and his

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elbows resting on the edge of the desk. But his mind seemed somehow to have got away from his control. Everything distracted him. Never had his consciousness been so acute. He heard the newsboys calling the last editions in the streets below; he paused to listen as the bell on some church tolled out distantly; he fidgeted when the clerk began to whistle a popular air with cheerful shrillness. At length he rose and opened the door.

"Will you have the goodness to stop this infernal noise?" he said brusquely.

The clerk stammered an apology. It was not more than ten minutes, however, before Eastwin appeared to him again. This time he threw down a couple of theatre tickets.

"I shall not be able to get away to-night," he said. "If you can use these, let the reference go until to-morrow."

He waited, standing, while the clerk made his preparations for departure, and when he had gone turned the key in the lock with a sigh of relief. Going back, he lighted his pipe and fell into his first position. During that hour he had possessed a wife, a home, children with eyes like hers, perhaps,—and lost them. His hands stretched out mechanically

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toward a bundle of memoranda lying near.

"After all," he said aloud, drawing a deep breath, "there is nothing for me but work."

Ten days later Eastwin sat at the same desk, turning over his morning's mail. His practiced glance readily detected the official from the business and personal letters. An envelope bearing the Ponce de Leon stamp in one corner and addressed in the familiar handwriting of Hollis Sage would in any case have been selected for immediate attention. It contained, as he expected, instructions and inquiries about a suit then pending, but on the last page the writer continued in an untidy scrawl. "We are in great trouble about my daughter, who is seriously ill. The physicians give us little hope. Do not write to me unless necessary, as I am hardly fit to consider these details and prefer to rely on your judgment."

Eastwin's first thought, as he laid the letter down, was the necessity of letting Hunneman know. From dwelling on the subject he believed that he had accustomed himself to the fact that Hunneman and Miss Sage belonged to each other. It was only a question of waiting, before the final avowal of

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Hunneman would make this known to everybody. He called to some one to ring for a messenger, and, taking out a sheet of paper, wrote the date in hastily. So far he had acted on impulse.

Now, in the hesitation of wording his news, he leaned back pondering, and all at once what it meant and his first indignation against Hunneman came over him with a rush of feeling. His long evening's meditation was swept away by it, and he remembered only Hunneman's confidences. He argued to himself that any conscientious man would recoil from helping such a man as Hunneman to the love of such a woman. When the messenger came, he paid and discharged him. But as the day wore on and from time to time he caught opportunities in the pressure of work to consider what he had done, he grew more honest with himself. His self-interest became very plain to him. If he were out of the question, he recognized that it was not of Hunneman, but of comfort to the girl who might be dying, that he should think. He had not really admitted the possibility of her dying until that moment, and with the admission came a fresh fear.

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Closing his desk, he caught up his coat and hat, and started out. At the foot of the stairs a newsboy offered him the evening papers. He bought a *Transcript* and, leaning against the doorway, unfolded it deliberately at the death notices. His hands shook a little as his eye ran down the column, and he saw that the thing he dreaded was not there. Crushing the paper into his pocket, he turned northward. It was his fixed purpose to find Hunneman without delay and tell him.

The day was bracing, and the streets were filled with people. Eastwin jostled through the crowds in the shopping district out on to the broader thoroughfares. He walked briskly, intent upon his errand. Oddly enough, he had never visited Hunneman in his rooms, although he knew the apartment house well by sight. It loomed up conspicuously in the distance, and as he approached it he was conscious of a sort of triumph at his own right-mindedness. In a few moments, he kept saying to himself, Hunneman would know. He had reached the steps. Mentally it seemed to him he had gone up them; actually, he realized with a sudden dismay, he had gone by. The recoil had been swifter

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than in the morning, and more certain. He had the perception to understand that it was useless to make a fight with himself. He could not force himself to turn and seek Hunneman; instead, he crossed into a side street and made his way back to the city.

The following morning he went into the western part of the state to try a case. He was gone five days. On the night of his return it had been drizzling for some hours, and the station within and without presented a scene of damp desolation. But although it was already late, he gave the cabman an order to drive as quickly as possible to Hunneman's apartment. The down-town theatres were already pouring out motley hurrying crowds as Eastwin drove past. He looked out on them with tired, indifferent eyes.

Hunneman's manservant admitted that his master was at home. He showed Eastwin into a small library, and took his card. Eastwin, worn out with work and worry, seated himself in one of the large leather chairs and stared absently at the walls lined with bookshelves reaching to the ceiling. From between the gaping door-curtains a glimpse could be caught beyond of a long table set

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with silver and cut glass. Bunches of Jacqueminot roses had been thrown on the gleaming linen at intervals, and slender green palms rose from the center of the table. On the sideboard the decantered liquors caught the light like jewels. Pink-shaded candles already lighted cast a rose glow over the whole. Eastwin became aware that these must be preparations for some festivity.

Hunneman entered. His manner showed neither constraint nor cordiality. After the first exchange of greetings his attention obviously wandered. Now and then he inclined his head with an air of expectancy toward the outer door. Eastwin could not help seeing that his presence was inopportune, and this spurred him directly to the point.

"I have been away," he began, "but that is no reason why I should not have written. I hope you will overlook it." If Hunneman had been paying close attention, the tenseness in the other's manner must have struck him. "I have had a letter from Mr. Hollis Sage," Eastwin went on, driving his words out with abrupt force. "It was written nine days ago, and his daughter was then dangerously ill at

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the Ponce de Leon. The physicians had given up hope. I have not heard since."

Hunneman stroked his blond mustache without replying at once.

"I ought to have let you know," Eastwin hastened to add. "I knew of course that you would want to go."

Hunneman glanced up with a swift expression of astonishment followed by one of comprehension. Instantly he had resumed his formal air.

"I am very sorry to hear of Miss Sage's illness," he said. His voice had the properly subdued but unsympathetic quality of one who speaks of another's trouble. "She is a very charming girl. I have always admired her, as you are aware."

A dull flush spread over Eastwin's face as he listened: he did not attempt to conceal his surprise.

"Admired her!" he repeated blankly. "Only admired her! And now that she is dying you do not even care to go to her?"

"Oh, I hope not so bad as that." Hunneman made a deprecatory gesture. "I think we may consider no news good news. I am sorry if you interpreted anything I said to you

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the other day to be either a wish or a warrant for my going. I suppose that under the influence of being with her I may have spoken rather indiscreetly; and then, my dear fellow, you take these things so deadly in earnest."

The two men had risen simultaneously, and stood facing each other. Eastwin now stretched out his hand and caught the younger man by the sleeve.

"How about her?" he asked with a catch in his voice.

"About her?" Hunneman frowned with a look of annoyance. "About her?"

"Oh, never mind," Eastwin interposed hurriedly. "I see now."

As he passed out, the arrival of guests blockaded the hallway. There were two or three women among them, and they discarded their wraps with a good deal of noisy laughter. The foremost of them, a large blonde with suspiciously brilliant copper-colored hair and fleshy shoulders, stared at Eastwin out of her prominent blue eyes. He recognized her as an actress who had recently figured on the bill-boards of a popular theatre.

"Isn't your friend going to stay?" she called pertly to Hunneman over her shoulder.

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Eastwin described his journey to Florida, afterward, as a daze. He took no account of time; he could not have told offhand on his arrival whether he had been one day or seven on the way. Arrangements had seemed to make themselves. The first sensation he had of being actively alive was when he entered the office of the hotel and heard his own voice asking for Mr. Hollis Sage. The clerk awakened him even more thoroughly by replying that the Hollis Sages were no longer at the hotel. After a moment he added that he believed they had taken a cottage. Another man on being questioned was able to say which cottage and direct Eastwin there.

He had no difficulty in finding the place. The house was long and rambling, having a width of piazza on three sides. Bamboo screens met the inquisitive gaze of the passers-by.

He did not dare to question himself. Having come so far without considering the consequences, he felt now that nothing remained but to go in and hear the worst. The hall door stood ajar, and beyond he could see a cozy confusion of bentwood and wicker furniture. There were fresh flowers in the

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vases, and magazines and papers lying about on the tables. Everything had an appearance of cheer and well-being. But Eastwin hesitated fearfully with his hand on the bell, and as he did so a low, surprised voice came to him from a distant corner of the piazza.

"Why, Mr. Eastwin!" it said. "Why, Mr. Eastwin!"

There was a moment when he could not speak. Then he went quietly forward to the steamer-chair where Agatha lay propped against gay crimson cushions. She was thinner, very much thinner,—he could see that; but as she sat up to welcome him the exertion caused a delicate convalescent's flush to rise in her pale cheeks.

"Are you taking a vacation?" she inquired.

"No."

He seated himself, but without changing his first wandering gaze. She explained this scrutiny in her own way.

"Am I so much changed?" she asked.

He replied that she was not changed at all.

"That is polite of you, only I know better," she said; then, as if recollecting herself, she added: "But you must want to see

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papa. I am so sorry, he has gone shooting with some friends, and that means he will not appear until dinner. If you will stay and make the best of mamma and myself until then, we shall be very glad."

Under the most propitious circumstances Eastwin was not skilled in turning pretty phrases. He now said, "Oh, thank you!" very simply.

"Isn't it delicious here?" she went on.

He replied without enthusiasm that it was delicious.

"Had you a pleasant journey?"

"I—I'm sure I don't remember," he answered honestly.

"I am sorry you should have missed papa," she said, finding him unresponsive.

There was a short silence. Words seemed to have failed him.

"Had you heard of my illness?" she asked at last.

"Yes, your father told me when he wrote—when you were first ill."

"But I am better now. I am going to be quite myself soon." Her voice held a palpable entreaty that he would not contradict her.

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"I am sure of that," he answered convincingly.

She leaned forward and clasped her hands in an easy attitude around one knee. Her eyelids were lowered.

"I suppose," she said, "that I came very near dying. Would you think me a coward, Mr. Eastwin, if I said that I was afraid to die? I rebelled against dying. I remember that I used to complain to you about not accomplishing anything. While I was lying there, and they had given me up, I seemed to see all the things that I might have been. But," she added a little mournfully, "I suppose I shall be just as useless and restless again when I am quite well. I have thought that I was going to be better before."

As Eastwin did not respond, she changed her tone suddenly with an embarrassed laugh.

"You are a very serious person, Mr. Eastwin, and I seem to be making you a confession. You will pardon me. I know that you did n't come to St. Augustine for the confession of an invalid."

"Yes," asserted Eastwin suddenly and boldly, "I did."

Agatha raised her eyes, and then averted

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them again quickly. She did not blush, but he noticed that her hands trembled.

"Perhaps I ought to wait before saying it," he said, "but you don't know what I've suffered. For ten days I have n't known whether you were better or worse. I have been a fool. I thought that I had no right to know—that another man was the one that you would wish to see—that I would n't be welcome."

He paused, but something in her silence emboldened him to speak further.

"Agatha, am I welcome?" he asked.

When the trained nurse came to the door half an hour later, she found them still sitting together. He had hold of Agatha's hands, and her face was turned up to his with a tender radiance such as the trained nurse in all her life had never seen before. As she stood wavering, she heard him say:—

"After all what is there in the world but this—to be together—you and I?"

Then, being a wise and honorable woman, she turned and went away as softly as she had come.

A COMMON AMBITION

A Common Ambition

DEERFIELD was only incidentally suburban. This, in the beginning, resulted probably from chance rather than election. Its location from the first was against growth. Had it stretched straight across the lowlands, instead of lying on the bias, it would have met the line of travel to half a dozen recognized suburbs; this might have altered many things. But nowadays, with the modest indifference of a maiden lady who expects little of the future, it saw no advantage in putting itself forward. Of enterprise it had none, save that which is required to fill the simple, material needs of a primitive existence. Its business methods combined a neighborhood friendliness, with an instinct for bargaining. Under stress of circumstances, almost every house on the dusty, dry road, which the town mainly bordered, could

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be turned into a marketing place. In vegetable time the custom of exchange predominated. There was no competition. Among the women it was as if they had "pooled" their ambition for feminine fineries in a formal agreement to wear only the village importations. Boston existed in the minds of most of them with vague but romantic interest. Occasionally some one visited the city, and from thence on, until succeeded by a more recent traveler, she became an authority on many matters of fitness and form. The religious life of Deerfield was mechanical. A revival had not touched it into fervor for twenty years. Like a shrunken branch, it was left sapless on its twigs, yet likely to live as long as its root tree.

The Snow family had been born and bred there for fifty years; and the narrative of its life was like a familiar book to the people thereabouts. The house which the grandfather had built stood inconspicuously, a quarter of a mile below the main settlement. It was one and a half stories high, and had been set on a level with the street. During the wet season, muddy pools formed in its front yard; during the dry season, patches of burned

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grass alternated with sandy hollows. The only shade afforded was from a weeping willow at the back of the lot. This hung low over the shop, and its moist limbs had caused the shingles on the roof to decay in places. It gave, however, a touch of picturesqueness to what otherwise would have been hardly more than a shed. Its long, slender leaves made a fringe across the top of the sign where the words "Mable Yard" had been almost wholly obliterated by the wear of the weather. But the place by no means belonged to the past. In evidence of practical activity, blocks of marble and uncut granite lay about the wide door, and within were a few plain, polished slabs, such as are commonly used as monuments by those people who still speak of the last resting-place of their dead as a burying ground.

The night was hot, and the katydids and crickets in the swamp beyond filled the air with buzzing resonant noises.

Bella Snow came out from the front door of the house, and walked down the pebbly path, preceded by a young man. The young man closed the gate between them, and, turning, rested his elbows on the low rail, and his

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chin in his hands. He was thick-set, and a layer of summer tan alone saved his face from being florid. His clothes were of some cheap, loosely-woven material, but hung on his figure with certain pretensions to style. He held a match between his shaven lips, and his hat was tilted far back to one side of his head.

Brought to so sudden a stop, the girl turned sideways, and looked away with a half-coquettish, half offended expression. Her coloring was noticeably brilliant. Her brown-black hair, arranged low, with gilt hairpins, was defined cleanly against her neck. A pointed; uncurled bang partly covered her forehead. Her cheeks were red, almost to the point of being blowsy; and her dark eyes stared out boldly under heavily marked brows. When she spoke, her hands emphasized her words by constant gestures; they were large hands, firm, but not particularly clean, and with square-tipped fingers. She wore a ready-made blue serge skirt and jacket, and a shirt of pink and white plaids, fastened with silver buttons in the form of horseshoes. Among the clerks in the city store, where she went to work daily, she was often spoken of as "very showy."

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Emerson regarded her in silent admiration, as she irritably pulled slender stalks of phlox from a clump near by.

"Then you won't stay till the late train?" she asked, evidently repeating a question already answered.

"Can't—honest, Bella. I've got to meet a man in Boston at nine o'clock."

Bella put up her chin skeptically, and made an elusive duck with one shoulder, as he stretched out a conciliatory hand.

"Lots I see of you nowadays," she complained, with a weak attempt of sarcasm.

The young man straightened himself, and folded his arms.

"Now, look here, Bella," he said; "no nonsense. Do you want to marry me, or don't you? Isn't two years about long enough to be engaged? Wouldn't you like a home of your own, with curtains, and carpets, and all those things you're forever talking about? Ain't you tired of getting up at five o'clock, and going in and standing on your feet all day? Well, then, quit nagging me when I'm trying to get ahead. I can't be here and working too, can I? If you were'nt so handsome, I swear I believe you'd make me sick of you."

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The girl seemed to feel the justice of this outburst.

"I did n't mean to plague you, Jerry," replied she, meekly; "but I guess we'll both be ready by fall, without your working so awful hard."

"I know you're smart, but I don't marry till I can support a wife as she'd ought to be supported. All or nothing with me. Why, I mean to let you keep a hired girl, right off, to begin with."

Bella flushed with pleasure, and moved nearer the gate.

"You're real good to me."

"Then give me that kiss."

She hesitated.

"Now, ain't she stand-off!" the young man exclaimed, with an air of speaking to a third person. "Mighty cute, ain't it, to be engaged to a man two years and keep him as much tickled with a kiss as he was at first? That's what I like about you, Bella,"—dropping into his natural manner,—“your spirit—there's nothing cheap about you. Come, now, no fooling—time's up.”

Bella leaned towards him promptly; then he turned and plunged; running,

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into the gathering shadow of the street.

At the door of the house she met her father coming out, with an oil lamp in his hand. He held it high, so that the light fell full on her face, and peered underneath. She was radiant.

"Be'n seein' Jerry off?" he asked, in the conclusive tone of one who already knows the reply.

"Yes, I have. Where you going?"

"Well, I thought mebbe I might get ahead a leetle on Mis' Barnaby's foot-stun. Not but what them sons-in-law o' hers hev' been long enough makin' up their minds to pay for it, to ease my conscience of a little jaggin'."

Bella stood aside, in order to let him pass. He went on to the shop, and, after several trials, finally located the lamp to his satisfaction on a block of granite. It cast its glow equally on the sparse gray hairs of his head and the unfinished foot-stone before him. He was not a very old man, but all the sunshine and force seemed to have dried out of his countenance, leaving it meekly patient. His shoulders were bent from much stooping; his faded blue eyes showed a depleted vitality;

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the skin on his jaws hung loose and withered. All his motions were gentle, almost deprecatory. When spoken to abruptly, or otherwise startled, he would look up with an expression of dazed inquiry, which might easily have become vacant. There were no hereditary characteristics traceable between Bella and this parent.

He chiselled busily for a few moments. Presently he began talking to himself, in a sort of mutter.

"Dear me! dear me! Was the middle letter B or E? Bella!" raising his voice so that it quavered. "Bella, was Mis' Barnaby's middle letter B or E?"

"I'm sure I don't know." The girl spoke curtly, annoyed at the interruption of her day dreams.

Lemuel rose, and walked stiffly back to the house.

"Dear me! dear me! I must get the paper, I s'pose. I b'lieve I don't remember quite so well as I once did."

When he came out again, Bella followed him, and stood leaning against the wide doorway while he worked. Her eyes had the fixed, intent look of one who saw nothing but

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her own thoughts. After a little she began to speak them aloud.

"There ain't any doubt but what the house'll be done by fall, is there, pa?"

"Oh, Lord, no, dearie. Why, at the rate bizness keeps up there'll be oilcloth on the front entry by then. Seems now as if bizness was going to be putty brisk. There's the Martins hev'n't put up anything to their baby yet, and the Backuses and Reads both buried last week."

"Jerry thinks I'm pretty high and mighty," she said, still intent upon herself; "but I guess I've got good reason to be, if he only knew it. There don't many girls bring a house of their own, part furnished."

Lemuel's face lighted with an involuntary, tender smile. To hear his daughter say he had done well for her was a deeper joy than that of her birth had been. It was the fulfilment of his life's object.

"You didn't tell him nuthin', did you, Bella?"

"What do you take me for? You don't think I've kept it this long to give it away now, do you? Been over to-day pa?"

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"Yes, I wuz, long about noon, when the men were layin' off. The shinglin's done, and they 're puttin' up posts for the piazza."

Bella laughed aloud in her satisfaction.

"I guess when my friends come out from town they 'll think it's just splendid."

Lemuel made no immediate reply. The irregular click of his chisel alone broke the silence. After a while he said, more as if speaking to himself than to her.—

"I wish your ma could hev' lived to see it."

"Well, I guess she couldn't find much fault."

"Your ma didn't find fault; leastways, not often," returned he, literally. "And I pestered her considerable, I wuz so slow. She wuz more like you, Bella, up and doin'. It used to make her narvous to see me putter. But if she could see the house, she would n't think I'd puttered fifty years for nothin', would she, eh?"

Bella listened, without fully comprehending. She was trying to decide whether to tie back the curtains in the parlor with yellow or blue ribbon.

"No, I guess not," she replied, absently.

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"I s'pose folks think I've been kinder close with you." Lemuel went on. "They laid it up agin' me, I calc'late, your goin' into the store. I dunno how they know so much 'bout city evils when most of 'em ain't never been in the city more 'n a day at a time, but seems the way they've acted they thought I wuz pitchin' you head foremost into a firey furnace. I don't blame 'em. 'Tain't none of my bizness what they think of me, tho' I did feel kinder bad when Jenkins threw it up to me how I had n't put up a stun'to your ma, and it right in my line. P'rhaps I'd ought not ter hev' pinched and scrimped quite so much. Them habits grow, they say." He glanced up doubtfully. "Yov've hed to work hard for what you 've had, Bella."

The girl roused at the sound of her name.

"Land, pa what are you talking about? I've had my keep and a home, and all my salary for clothes; what more could I expect?"

Lemuel gave a soft sigh, partly of weariness and partly of contentment.

"You'll be paid for it all now," he replied, thinking of the unfinished house, with the bay window and the front piazza.

Bella yawned.

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"Yes, Jerry'll give me everything," she said, complacently. "He's a hustler, Jerry is. I saw you'd put some codfish to soak for breakfast; that makes the third time this week we've had it."

"Oh, that's just for me," he apologized. "I meant to bile you an egg, or p'rhaps you'd rather have a leetle dried beef, if the market's open."

During the next two months the new house progressed rapidly toward completion. The danger that Jerry should hear of its ownership was now almost passed. So strictly had the contractor held his agreement of silence, that even village curiosity remained unsatisfied. Besides, for some reason, Jerry's visits had of late become less and less frequent. Bella, tired from the long, hot days in the shop, and intent on her bridal sewing, hardly noticed this. But the Briggs, who lived on the direct road to the station, kept a sort of unacknowledged schedule among themselves of his comings and goings. They also commented on the fact that he wore better clothes and more conspicuous neckties than formerly. A large snake ring on his little finger did not escape their notice, as

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they peered through the down-turned shutters. He carried himself with the jaunty air of one who not only prospers, but is in a position to patronize his former associates. Although they had never met him, the Misses Briggs felt and resented this. There were four of them, and they had not been on good terms with Bella for some years. Accordingly, it soon began to be rumored about town that "if Jerry Emerson was that sort of a young man, extravagant and not likely to be faithful, Bella Snow ought to thank merciful Providence if he did jilt her."

Meanwhile Bella, unconscious of gossip, was happily planning for an autumn wedding. To be sure, the exact date had not been set, nor had Jerry apparently decided where they were to live. Whenever Bella questioned him about it, in order to make his surprise in the house more complete, he would change the subject with awkward haste. Once, when she was not to be turned aside from it altogether, he replied :

"Now, you leave that to me. When the time comes, you'll find a roof over your head, I rather guess."

But one Sunday afternoon he appeared

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unexpectedly. It was shortly after the mid-day meal. He had said that he should not come, and when he arrived Bella was sitting upstairs in the cool comfort of a white sacque. She kept him waiting, however, while she put on the blue serge. The day was very warm, and Jerry, below, mopped his brow impatiently. His brilliant red tie seemed to focus all the heat and radiate it again. When Bella at last came down, they went into the front room, and seated themselves on the hair-cloth sofa, as usual. The other furniture consisted of a marble-topped table and two chairs. A worked motto hung on the white wall, over the shelf where the fireplace should have been. Two large pink shells flanked it on either side. There were green shades, with worsted tassels, at the windows, but no screens, and the flies buzzed and lunged in every direction.

When they had talked for a few moments, Jerry took out of his pocket a small brown package, and handed it to her. This proved to be an amber hairpin. Bella gave a shrill cry of delight on opening it; she held it up, watching it glint in the sunlight, and glancing from it to Jerry and back again.

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"Oh, how sweet of you," she said. "It's perfectly stunning."

Jerry watched her play with it for awhile, and then suddenly became serious.

"Come," said he, "let us talk business. When are you going to marry me, Bella?"

Bella flushed and threw up her head.

"Oh, I do n't know—any time—'long about Christmas, maybe."

"Christmas! Gammon! Set some day next month. See here, Bella, do n't be stiff. Because I did n't tell you where we were going to live, you didn't think I was holding off, did you? Now I'm ready to make a clean breast of it, and you 'll see why I couldn't say anything before. I was n't sure how things would turn out; and you and the old man wouldn't have understood. It's just this, Bella; I've been striking out on my own hook—investing a little. I saw a good thing in land in this new place—Glenville. I borrowed three hundred dollars and put into it, and two weeks later sold for four hundred and fifty. Well, that's about the way things have gone right along. Jerry Emerson ain't afraid of work, and he ain't afraid to try his luck, either."

Bella stopped fingering the comb, and

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would have replied, but he swept on in the torrent of his enthusiasm.

"You'd ought to see Glenville; she's a daisy. Row after row of the prettiest Queen Anne houses, packed in as tight as they can squeeze. Makes it gay and sociable evenings you know; and it's all come up within five years."

"I've heard of it. Our floorwalker lives there."

"Well, you'd better keep on good terms with him, then, for—*you're going to live there, too.*"

He leaned back, prepared to enjoy the effect of this announcement. He had expected that she would be startled—but not so much startled. She trembled, and her eyes dilated. The amber hair pin fell to the floor, and lay unnoticed.

"Oh, wait, wait just a minute," she begged. "I want to tell you something first. Pa said I might tell you. Oh, Jerry, what do you think pa's done? He's built a house. He's been saving for it ever since ma died, and since you and I've been keeping company he's most worked himself to death to earn enough. It cost fifteen hundred dollars."

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The young man's jaw dropped. A dark flush spread over his face and ran down into his thick neck. He stared helplessly at Bella, without attempting to speak.

"Built a fifteen-hundred-dollar house out here," he gasped, finally. "Sank fifteen hundred dollars in this ditch-water place. Lord, Bella, why didn't you tell me?"

"Pa wouldn't let me. He said you were marrying me, and the house was n't any affair of yours until we were married."

Jerry picked up his hat and flung it into the opposite corner.

"Why, Jerry, I thought you'd be pleased."

"Pleased!" he cried; "pleased to see fifteen hundred dollars thrown away! What couldn't I have done with fifteen hundred dollars!"

"It is n't thrown away; it's a splendid house. Everybody's just wild to find out who it belongs to."

"Well, it won't ever belong to me."

"Why, Jerry?"

"Now, look at here, Bella. You ought to know me well enough to know I would n't live in such a dead-and-alive hole as this. An hour

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in on the train in the morning, and an hour out every night."

"I've done it."

"Oh, yes; you've done it. You've done other things, too. You've kept this house a secret, and you see what good is going to come of it."

"Wait until you see the house, Jerry."

"I don't want to see your fool house. I won't live in it, and I could n't if I would. I've put every cent of my money in a land scheme in Glenville, and a man has contracted to build some houses on the land, and we're to live in one of 'em. I closed with him last night; the thing's signed, and there is no going back on it. If your father had told me, he might have gone into it, too; he might have died a rich man."

Bella put up her hands, as if to ward off a blow.

"Pa was going to half furnish the house."

"Well, he can furnish just as well in Glenville."

The girl stood up. In her indignation her figure appeared to grow fuller; her coloring deepened at every point.

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"Who is going to live in pa's house?" she demanded.

"I guess he'll have to live in it himself."

"And I say he won't," she flung back. "Perhaps you think I'm one to desert my old father like that. You don't know me, do you? My father's always been better to me than I deserved, and if this place ain't good enough for you, Jerry Emerson, why, then, I guess it's you who will have to do the living by yourself."

"Now, Bella, be reasonable."

"I am reasonable."

"No, you are not. Who have I been slaving for these two years, but you? Who am I buying a house for, anyway? Come, now, Bella, how could your father need you as much as I do? Why, I'd die without you—just die."

Bella relaxed a little from her first anger; she reseated herself, but avoided his arm.

"Then talk sense," she said, sharply.

"That's what I want to do. Now, I leave it to you, when a man has been planning and studying to give the girl he loves the best of everything, is it fair to treat him like this? I'm proud of you; you're a handsome woman, and I've been thinking that in Glenville you'd

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have the show that belongs to you. I'm going to make money right along now, and you could hold your own there. There's a big Methodist church right on the line, and I would take a seat, and you'd get to know the people right off. Then it's only fifteen minutes to Boston on the train, and we could go to the theatre real often."

Bella shook her head.

Jerry's voice grew more emphatic. "Don't you catch on that I've put all my money into this, and I've got to live there, to help the scheme along? Besides, I mean to grow up with the place, to be somebody. There is Jimmy Walker's wife with her name in the Sunday papers, and what was he ten years ago? Haven't you got any ambition?"

"I don't think I ought to leave pa," she persisted.

Jerry lost patience.

"Well, it's your choice between 'pa' and me, and you choose now," he said, roughly.

Bella covered her face, and rocked back and forth, but without tears. He went over and picked up his hat.

"You ain't going now, Jerry?"

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"Yes, I am, as soon as you make up your mind."

There was a short silence. Bella glanced about the room a little wildly. Jerry watched her.

"Oh, dear, how can I do it, how can I!" she burst forth. "He'd be so lonely, and it is such a lovely house."

The young man stood firm as a rock, without replying.

"We've planned just how to furnish it."

Still no answer.

"Oh, dear! Oh, Jerry, don't be so hard! Oh, what shall I do?" She began to sob, but he made no sign.

"It'll break father's heart," she wailed.

"Oh, Jerry, what do you make me do it for? I'm a bad, wicked girl."

He sprang forward and caught her around the neck.

"You're a little daisy!" he cried, triumphantly.

Lemuel was sitting on a sun-warmed block of marble in the side yard when the young couple approached him. Bella hung a few steps behind her lover. Jerry began by saying that, as he had said to Bella, enough

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trouble had come from trying to hide things, and, for his part, he meant to speak the straight truth. He had just heard about the house, and he appreciated Lemuel's kind intentions. At the same time he relied on Lemuel's common sense to see that if he didn't look after his own interests, nobody else would for him. Jerry admitted frankly that he didn't expect Lemuel to understand. Business and the ways of doing it had changed since he was a young man. All this, and a great deal more, Jerry repeated several times, with unusual loudness of voice. He repeated it more than he would if Lemuel's apathetic silence had not embarrassed him, and made it difficult to find a natural stopping place.

When it was plain that he had at last finished, the old man rose unsteadily, aiding himself by placing a hand on each knee. A gray tinge, like that of the granite which he worked on, had spread over his face.

"There's the old cow got loose," said he; "I must give her a fresh tether. If Bella likes Glenville best, I don't see as I'm called upon to say anything more. If she's happy, I am. All is, be good to her, Jerry."

"*Pa!*" Bella sprang forward.

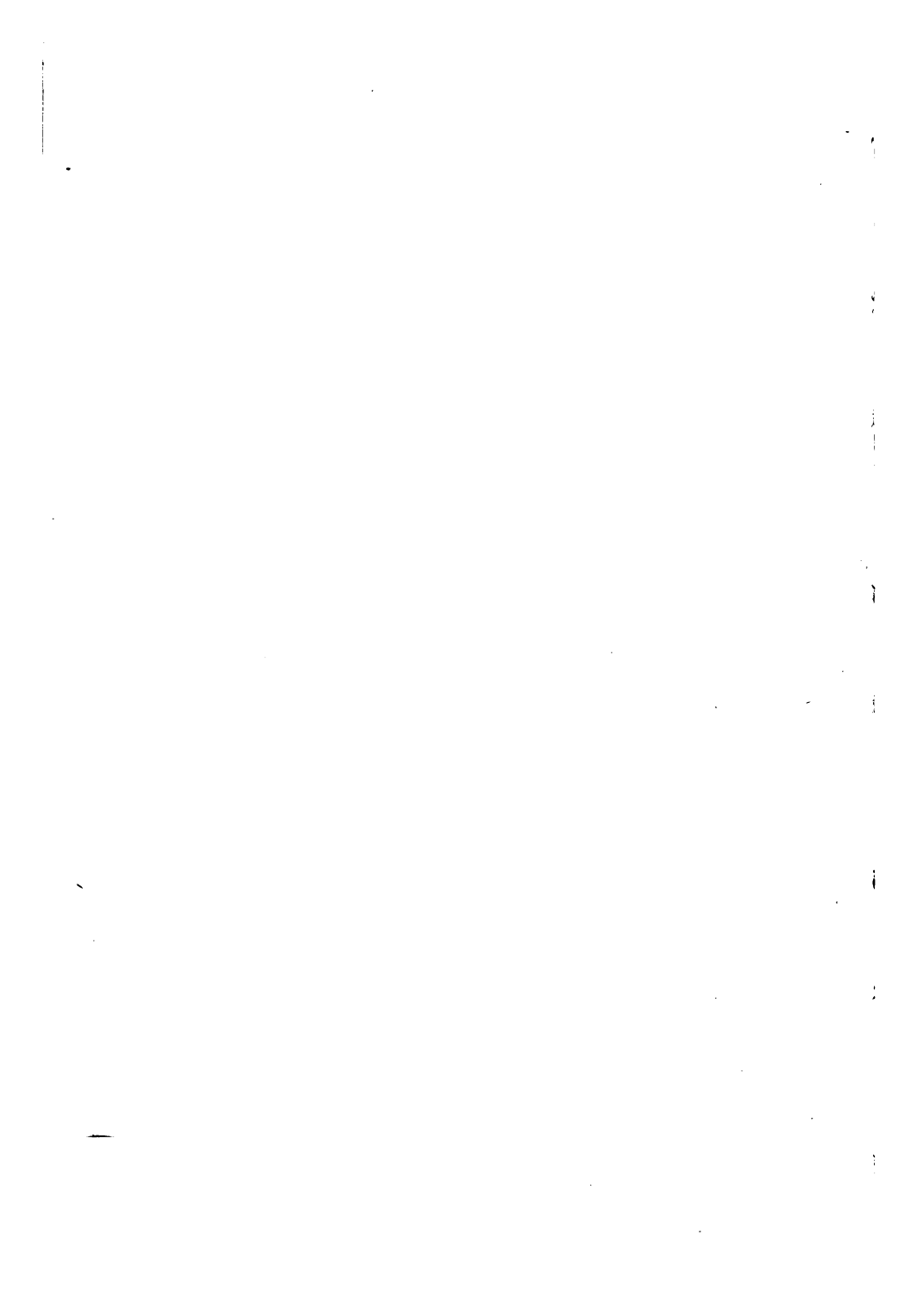
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"Now, now, now. There ain't no occasion to make a fuss. I'm sorry you ain't pleased, Jerry, but I guess if Bella can't use the house she'll let you sell it."

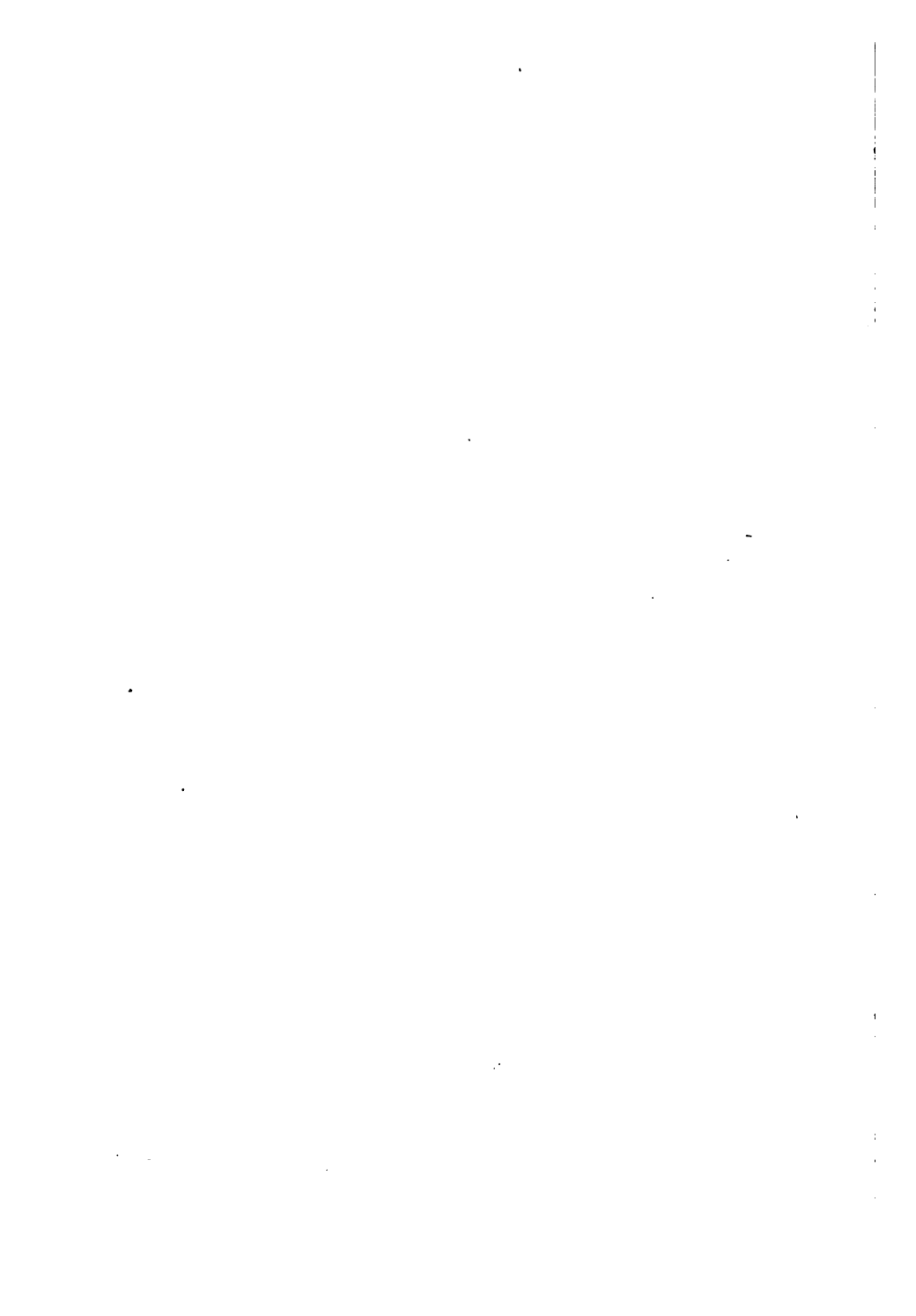
"We thought maybe you'd live in it, pa."

"Me? What 'ud an old man like me want with three chamber rooms and a bay winder?" Lemuel's voice quivered, but he made a feeble pretense at smiling. "You set right down here in the sun; it's real pleasant. I b'lieve that blamed cow *is* tryin' to break through. I—I'll go down and see."

"There," said Jerry, when he had gone, "what did I tell you? It did n't break him up a bit."



AN UNATTRACTIVE GIRL



An Unattractive Girl

“O F course such a thing has never come into our family before, and I feel with you, I want to help you. Now I should like the gray, and I will give you just what you paid Dulse for the green and magenta tea-gown.”

The speaker settled back in a Chippendale armchair, and looked inquiringly across the table toward her companion, who lay stretched at full length on a rug-covered divan. A high colonial screen of pressed leather, which had been placed behind it, cut off the rest of the room. The reclining woman had one of those aggressive personalities that attract and demand general attention. She was tall and startlingly slender,—a fact which the severe lines of her black gown brought more into notice. Her hair, of a sandy color,

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was full of life, and stood out in natural crinkles all over her head. She had blue eyes, now somewhat faded ; and her lips were so thin that, when not in motion, she often compressed them into an almost straight line. She spoke with that nervous quickness which is sometimes employed as an artificial substitute for the enthusiasm of youth.

"You are welcome to the gray," she said, "but the magenta and green was a great bargain, even from Paris. Dulse aspires to a large American patronage, and she made an effort. Still, I don't know,—by another year it will be a common combination,—and perhaps I couldn't wear it, even then. It is a very delicate point to decide, Harriet. When your husband chooses to leave you by his own hand, you can't be expected to mourn for him quite as you would if he had—well, gone from natural causes. Of course, I mourn ; but I can't help remembering the scandal of it. Now, what do you think, dear ? Frances will be coming out next season ; shouldn't I make an effort for her sake, and lighten my black a little ?"

Her visitor meditated. "It is a nice point," she said, thoughtfully shaking her

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head, "but people grow more liberal all the time. I should say you might wear gray and lavender. Nobody will stop to count the months; and, anyway, if you are bringing out your daughter, it will be an excuse."

At this moment a girl came suddenly around the corner of the screen. Her appearance checked the conversation instantly. Under the best of circumstances, she would not have been at all good looking. Her forehead ran back too far toward the centre of her head; her bones were too large for their covering of flesh; and, at present, her face was so swollen from weeping that it was impossible to judge how amiable or intelligent its expression might be. She glanced inquiringly at her mother, who had slipped into an upright position, and now gave a little gesture of dismay.

"What a fright you have made of yourself again, Frances!" she said. "Here is your cousin, Harriet, who has been comforting me most tenderly. Nobody in the family, Harriet, has said just the right thing to me, in the way you have. Most of them have showed no sensibility, no tact. The Remingtons came over, and put me through a regular catechism.

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Did I know of any cause? Was John embarrassed financially? Was he morbid? Was he ill? Had he overworked himself? They talked as if he were a martyr; and Frances is nearly as bad. Now, when a man leaves his family to disgrace—”

“Oh! mamma, please don’t!” The girl flushed painfully through her thin, freckled skin, and passed her hand, with an impatient motion, over her hair, which was several shades deeper red than her mother’s.

“Now, Frances, don’t try to dictate to me. Your cousin Harriet knows that it is so. There was no cause. We are not any poorer than we always have been, and I’ve always stretched a dollar twice as far as most women. If he wasn’t insane, I don’t know the reason.”

She was addressing the older woman at the end, but the girl faced about savagely. Her pink-rimmed eyes had caught fire; her hands were clinched. She glared at her mother, trembling like an animal ready to make an attack.

“I know the reason!” she flung out violently.

“Frances!”

“I know the reason perfectly well; he

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was nagged, nagged, nagged, and he got discouraged, and he couldn't bear it any longer, and he killed himself!" Her passion spent itself in the last words, and her voice shook. There was a moment's pause; then she turned, and, crying bitterly, stumbled out of the room.

The two older women had risen, and stood opposite each other. The visitor looked embarrassed and awkward.

"I must go," she murmured; "the horses are clipped."

Mrs. Vermilye raised her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Good-bye," she said, from behind it. "And don't mention this new trial to the rest of the family, Harriet, for Frances' sake."

Dinner had been over for a couple of hours, and Mrs. Vermilye sat beside her daughter's dressing-table, superintending her first ball toilet. The year of their mourning had ceased only ten days since, and, although Frances had been sent by her mother to opera parties, teas, and dinners at the end of eight months, this was, strictly speaking, her formal introduction to society. The face of the elder woman appeared anxious, and thinner than

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ever. Her voice sounded more irritable, and she talked out her thoughts, without much regard as to whether Frances responded or not.

"I do hope I'm not making a mistake in sending you with your aunt Eustis," she was saying. "She won't have the slightest notion about putting you forward. I wish I had sent an excuse to Sartoris, and gone with you myself. But your cousin Julia will help you. Try to imitate Julia a little, Frances; she is always a success with the men. Laugh a little, whether you are amused or not; try to seem interested; hold yourself up, and don't let that vacant stare come into your eyes!"

The girl made a quick attack upon her powder-box, but said nothing.

"If that yellow gown does n't give you self-confidence," her mother went on, "nothing ever will. That shade, with your hair, is tremendously effective. And after all, people would rather have a novelty than downright beauty; it takes better. Oh, dear, dear! life is so unexpected. When you were a baby, I used to dream of how I should bring you out, with a grand reception to all the best people; and now here we are, living in an apartment, and you care nothing; you have no faculty for

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any of these things. Frankly, Frances, I don't see where you get your temperament. Your poor father, in spite of everything, was genial."

She sighed, and regarded her daughter reproachfully. The girl went on with her dressing calmly, save for a slight contraction of her narrow nostrils.

"I don't think there is very much use in my going about, mamma," she said. "I am not pretty, and I can't talk small talk."

"Nonsense; it is not what one says, but the way one says it, that counts. You have no vivacity of manner."

"I don't feel any." Frances' voice quivered. "I never shall attract the sort of attention you mean, and I don't intend to try any more. Whenever I have, as you say, put myself forward to a man, he has always stared as if he were surprised, answered me in a hurry, and gone on talking across me to some other girl."

Her mother rose, and began to walk up and down the room impatiently.

"There, there; you talk like a little goose; you have no pride."

"I hope I have too much pride to clutch

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at every man as a possible husband." She sounded steadier, and more defiant.

"Now, don't be a schoolgirl, Frances. Nobody has said a word about clutching at husbands; although I trust, with all my heart, you may have a good one, who will give you the suitable home your father deprived you of. I am sure, I don't want you to marry any one whom you don't like; but at the same time, you ought to remember that we are not millionaires. I am straining every nerve to find you clothes, as it is; and you know perfectly well that you haven't the money for charities and arts, and all the fads that rich girls can make an excuse for not marrying."

Frances would have replied, but the entrance of a maid, bringing Mr. Sartoris' card, interrupted her.

Mrs. Vermilye glanced in a mirror, and touched up her laces.

"Let me see you before you go," she said.

Half an hour later, Frances appeared to her mother and Sartoris in the drawing-room, and stood awkwardly waiting for the former's inspection. Sartoris had risen as she entered, and his eyes now wandered over her indifferently. He was a large man, whose good

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living showed itself in too ample flesh and a shining, high-colored complexion. He expressed the polite hope, in an absent-minded manner, that Miss Frances would enjoy her ball, and resumed the conversation where it had been left, before she was fairly out of the room. As the maid put on her cloak, outside the door, she could hear him saying, "Yes, that land scheme was very fortunate; I shall build at Bar Harbor in the spring."

It was late when Frances came in, and the gas had been turned very low in the hall. As she felt her way along, the train of her dress caught on a chair, and she uttered a low exclamation. Instantly her mother called,—

"Is that you, Frances? Come into my room a moment."

The girl struck a light, and going over sat down on the edge of the bed. Her dress was as fresh and stiff, and her hair as smooth, as when she had left, four hours before. She had nothing of the fatigue and dishevelled look of a woman who had danced through an entire evening. Mrs. Vermilye shielded her eyes from the sudden glare, and blinked at her daughter inquiringly.

"Did you have a good time?" she asked.

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Frances pulled off her gloves, and rolled them up neatly.

"I don't suppose you would consider that I did," she replied, at last. "But I rather enjoyed watching the women, and the men were awfully funny sometimes."

"Funny! Didn't you dance?"

"Four times. Once with Cousin George, and twice with a man whose name I didn't catch, and once with Mr. Brundige."

Mrs. Vermilye propped herself up with an extra pillow.

"Well, I should think your aunt Eustis might have managed better than that for you. I wish I had gone myself."

"I think aunt Eustis made an effort," said the girl, flushing, but honest. "She presented a good many men; and Julia was kind, too. I tried to be pleasant; I think I tried too hard; anyway, it didn't make any difference, they all excused themselves."

Mrs. Vermilye gave an exasperated exclamation.

"Frances, it makes me shudder to hear you talk like this. If you think such things, you should n't say them. Never admit that you haven't everything you want. If you

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aim to succeed, pretend you're successful."

Francis unclasped her string of pearls, without replying.

"Who took you out to supper?"

"Lord Barton."

"Lord Barton? The man whose name I saw in the papers last Sunday. Isn't he a friend of the Lefforts? Why didn't you speak of him before?"

"There wasn't anything in particular to say of him. He is a nice old man, about sixty, I should fancy, and very quiet. I think he felt sorry for me. He took me down to supper, and we sat out a waltz. I asked him to call Friday."

"Frances!"

"Why, mamma, you always have said that I didn't ask men to our day."

"Of course, child; young men, whom we meet everywhere, and informally; but an Englishman of his age, with his ideas of propriety for a girl! Oh, you have no instincts! What will he think of you!"

Frances began to collect her wraps. "I am sorry I asked him," she replied, from the doorway, "because he said he should come."

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"Oh, by the way," called her mother, "Sartoris was more tiresome than ever; but he has a box for the new play Thursday, and we are to dine at the Waldorf, before it—six of us."

In spite of her protestations, Mrs. Vermilye's rooms had an aspect of particular festivity on the following Friday. There were hyacinths in the cut glass vases, and some gold spoons had been brought out for the tea-table. The lady herself looked more alive, more wiry, than ever, as she received, in an elaborate tea-gown. It was evident that Frances, too, had been dressed for the occasion; but the original design of her brocade coat, with its soft laces, was almost wholly lost by the awkward bearing with which it was worn.

Whether or not it had been intimated by Mrs. Vermilye that his lordship would drink tea with her, there was an unusual number of guests including a large family contingent. Toward the end of the afternoon, Lord Barton did, indeed, arrive. When he had met Mrs. Vermilye, and been duly seated beside her, he appeared a good deal embarrassed by the prominence of his position. One or two

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women who were near enough, put questions intended to give him a conversational start with themselves. Mrs. Vermilye called his attention to her French poodle, which had just strayed in. Thereupon, his right-hand neighbor began to gush: "Of course, Lord Barton loves dogs. All Englishmen have that true liking for animals and sport." The marvelously clipped poodle came over, and stood meekly before Barton, as if to apologize for the association of himself with the idea of killing anything. Nobody saw any humor in the situation. Even Lord Barton patted the dog's head kindly, and assured his inquirer that he was not a great sportsman; in fact, had not carried a gun for fifteen years.

Presently, during the commotion of a departure, he drifted over to a window-seat, where Frances was twirling a tea-ball diligently in a tiny cup. She flushed furiously at his approach, and two of her cousins raised their eyebrows significantly. Mrs. Vermilye saw it, and felt elated. It was probably the first time in her life that Frances had ever called forth this meaning in an eyebrow.

Neither she nor Lord Barton said much to each other. They both looked rather warm,

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and not quite at ease. Just at this juncture, however, general attention was diverted by the announcement of Mr. Sartoris.

He at once settled himself comfortably in the chair Lord Barton had left, and prepared to include the entire circle in his expansive conversation. Mrs. Vermilye introduced him to Lord Barton, and it provoked fresh outbursts.

"I am glad to meet your lordship," he went on, after the first civilities. "I've had it in my mind to visit your noble country, and I shall get there some day. It isn't the time that troubles me, you see; it's that infernal—I beg pardon—that six days on the water, away from the telegraph, away from all communication. If you are a business man, with large interests, you can't afford to take chances. And you don't realize, sir, how much can happen in six days here in America, if it once gets about it. Six minutes cleaned out a friend of mine on the Stock Exchange the other day."

Lord Barton bowed, with vague politeness, and Mrs. Vermilye's expression was a puzzle, when almost immediately he arose to depart.

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Not long after this tea, gossip began to take a more lively interest in the Vermilye family. It spoke of the mother in connection with Sartoris, and of the daughter as a possible Lady Barton. In the case of the latter, the newspapers took up the subject, graphically announcing an engagement on one day, and denying it the next. They went over all the details of the affair, on both sides, repeatedly. They rehearsed Lord Barton's history and the history of his house. They put headlines on Miss Vermilye's lack of history, as if it were a criminal case coming up for trial. Certain enterprising editors even made stock of the tragedy that had left her a half orphan. There was plenty of bitter for Mrs. Vermilye, mixed with the sweet of the publicity. Moreover, in the eyes of her friends she was well aware that, aside from his title, Lord Barton could not be considered as in any way a brilliant match for an ambitious girl. His disregard of social position, his frankly avowed lack of fortune, his small stature, and mild, hesitating manner, had all helped to keep him free from much matrimonial target practice. It was because the girl was Frances Vermilye, who was not

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ambitious, whose relatives had for years gone about openly pitying her plainness, that his attentions were regarded as little short of a miracle. Judged by an American standard, these attentions were, perhaps, not sufficient to give rise to such positive expectations. Indeed, it would have been difficult to trace a cause for the first public rumor of them. They consisted of frequent calls, during which he and Frances often read a new book while Mrs. Vermilye discreetly wrote notes on the other side of the portiere, gifts of books and flowers, and innumerable small courtesies at parties, or wherever they chanced to meet.

Mrs. Vermilye watched her daughter brighten and gain poise under these new conditions. She began to venture opinions on many subjects; she took an interest in her gowns; and, at her suggestion, a hairdresser now came twice a week to wave her hair in the prevailing fashion. Of most of the outside comment going on concerning her, however, she remained entirely ignorant. She had no intimate girl friend to speak of it, she seldom read newspapers, and her mother's suppositions and hints had, from their very constancy,

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long since ceased to have any great value in her mind.

It was while affairs were thus, to all appearances, favorable for another "international match," that his lordship created a disturbance by an unexpected departure for the West. He sent Miss Vermilye a bunch of yellow tulips, with a note of farewell, in which he spoke incidentally of their future meeting. These came during breakfast; and after Frances had read the little letter aloud, her mother took it between her thumb and finger, and used it as a text for various speculations on the subject. It was an unexpected thrust, and for a few moments her opinions were at seesaw with each other. Now it was "the most natural thing in the world that Lord Barton should go off to see the West at once, because later," significantly, "it might not be quite in order for him to run away." The next instant it was "queer that he had given no hint; it looked like a retreat."

Frances listened for half an hour, sometimes amused, sometimes annoyed. Her feelings could not have been definite to herself. When a girl has been systematically trained to regard herself chiefly from the point of

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view of any man who may possibly want to marry her, she is apt to lose sight of all personal inclinations.

Mrs. Vermilye went over the evidence of Lord Barton's preference for Frances again and again ; but it never for an instant entered into her calculations to consider her daughter's preference. After all, she probably took it for granted, that Frances had no right to a preference.

It was a week after his lordship's departure that Mrs. Vermilye came into Frances' room one afternoon, and insinuatingly demanded her immediate attention. It was evident that she had a disclosure to make, and she went about it systematically.

"My dear," she began, "I want to talk to you a little about practical matters. You will do me the justice to admit that I have always spared you these annoyances. But I don't think that you have ever quite realized how very little your poor papa left us to get along with. You have never been willing to hear a word against him,—not that I have anything to say against him that all the world has n't heard. But, at all events, you'll grant that it was like him, poor man, to have let one

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of his insurance policies lapse. There were some worthless securities, and of course, when I had to convert things into money, I lost. But I had to have ready money somehow; you can see that. You were coming out, and it meant your future. As it is, we have lived here very decently: you have worn good clothes, and you have gone everywhere. Nobody has suspected our strait, not even the Remingtons, who have been so near. I have managed—I have made my sacrifices—”

“You have been very, very kind, mamma,” broke in the girl. “If I haven’t seemed to appreciate it, you must remember that I am not demonstrative.”

Her mother moved uneasily.

“I don’t want you to be demonstrative, Frances, only sensible. I want you to see things as they are. Now, the truth is, yesterday I began to draw on the last thousand dollars we have in the world.”

She paused, as if to watch the effect of this statement. Frances gave a soft, sympathetic cry.

“Why did n’t you tell me? How selfish, how careless, I have been!” She put out her hand toward her mother, and then withdrew

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it suddenly, at the sight of the calm satisfaction in her face.

"You needn't begin to worry now," she said. "You have had your chance. I don't complain, although I have stood alone, with no one to advise me, or lean upon. Of course, people will have to know, sooner or later, that you are dowerless; but they can't have expected much. Lord Barton doesn't, I am sure. There is only one thing: he might draw back, if he knew you had a mother dependent upon you. Englishmen and foreigners feel more strongly against mothers-in-law than we do here, in this country. No, don't interrupt me. You remember Fanny Wilmoughby, who married that German, Prince what-is-his-name? When her mother wanted to see her, she had to go and board in the village; she was never invited to sleep at the castle. Think of the humiliation! And you couldn't expect me to want to be a burden, could you?"

"Why will you persist in taking all this about Lord Barton so horribly for granted!"

"I take nothing for granted; I simply don't intend to stand in your light."

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"How can you speak as if I should be like Fanny Willoughby?"

"Well, I should be a superannuated old woman, any way, with a place before your library fire. I should be grandmother to your children, and expected to tell them stories, no doubt. To have no authority, to be put aside; I tell you, quite frankly, I could n't stand it. A way has been offered me out of all this anxiety. For both of our sakes, I intend to take it." She paused, and then added quietly, "I am going to marry Sartoris."

Frances sat straight, silent for several seconds.

"You are going to marry—you?" she gasped.

Her mother colored angrily at the tone. "And why not? Am I in my second childhood?"

"I don't believe it."

"My dear Frances, you are unreasonable. I tell you that we are paupers. You assure me in one breath that Lord Barton means nothing; in the next you blame me. But why should you blame me? Mr. Sartoris is ready to do all that a father can for you."

"Father!" the girl turned as if she had

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been struck. "That man my father! That vulgar, dissipated—Oh, mamma, don't sell yourself to him—don't—don't!"

"Frances, you forget I am your mother."

"No, I don't; I don't forget it; but it doesn't deceive me. He would never have been permitted to come here at all, if it hadn't been for his money. He has bought his way in, with his theatre boxes and parties. Money, you say you haven't any; but there must be something else. Somebody will help us. The Remingtons will let us stay with them, until we can think what to do. Oh, mamma, don't, *don't* marry him!" She threw herself down on her knees, sobbing; but Mrs. Vermilye drew away.

"I am not an object of charity yet," she said; "and it seems to me you have an odd way of showing your gratitude to the mother who has given up everything for you, and to Mr. Sartoris, who offers you a home with us as long as you need one."

While she was speaking, Frances had risen.

"I shall never need one," she replied in a low voice. "If I should starve in the streets, I should never need a home paid for in this way."

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The following days were trying for both mother and daughter. Each, apparently, was waiting for the other to bring about a second crisis. Affairs were in this state when Lord Barton made known his return by an afternoon call. Mrs. Vermilye was out paying visits, and Frances received him. The next morning he returned again, however, and asked to see Mrs. Vermilye alone. When he had gone Mrs. Vermilye hastened to hunt up her daughter, with a countenance of beaming conciliation. She swept away all awkwardness by embracing the girl warmly.

"I congratulate you!" she cried. "It is just as I had supposed it would be; Lord Barton has asked me for you."

Frances disengaged herself mechanically. She seemed dazed.

"He was so manly about it!" her mother continued. "He admitted that he hadn't a large income; but then you will be presented, and have a position. I didn't forget your interests. I made it a condition that he should go out more. Darling Frances, I am so happy for you!"

"I don't know what you mean," she

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answered, almost roughly. "I am not going to marry Lord Barton."

"He spoke to me first, dear ; it is the custom of his country. He loves you."

"Did he say he loved me?"

"He spoke with great feeling."

"No ; he does not love me," cried Frances.

"I have been thinking, lately, about what was right and wrong, and now I know what I never did before,—I just waited for things to turn up, and accepted them. But I will tell you what it is, mamma ; I have been shamelessly flung at his head. I realized it in one way, and in another I didn't. He was so old, and he took more interest in me than anybody, and tried to help me to get something out of myself. I knew everybody was thinking that he might, perhaps, be willing to marry me, and if he were, I ought to be very grateful. I am not pretty ; I am not rich. It wasn't the highest bidder in my case ; it was any bidder. I suppose I must have admitted this to myself, or I wouldn't have gone on listening to you. But I know better now. I know what it means to sell one's self for a home."

Her mother colored at the last words, but ignored them in her reply.

AN UNATTRACTIVE GIRL

"Are you sure you don't love him?" she asked. "Are you sure love wouldn't come after marriage? It often does."

"It wouldn't matter if I did love him," Frances persisted. "He doesn't love me; he is only sorry for me. Why, only yesterday I told him,"—she hesitated, then went on,—"I told him about you. I said I should go to work. I asked his advice, his help. You see, he thinks I am not even clever enough to take care of myself. He pities me; oh, he must pity me very much indeed, to marry me!"

Mrs. Vermilye grew a little pale, and her thin hands worked nervously. She could hardly hold back her voice from a shriek.

"You have been very wicked and untruthful," she said. "You have tried to cast a slur on your mother. You have showed no gratitude for Mr. Sartoris' hospitality. I, who have made every sacrifice for you—you would bring another disgrace upon me."

"I shall not bring any disgrace on you," replied Frances quietly. "I shall be honest, and I shall work. I am sorry for what I said the other day. I don't want you to think I blame you for what you are going to do. It isn't for me to judge. I was doing the same

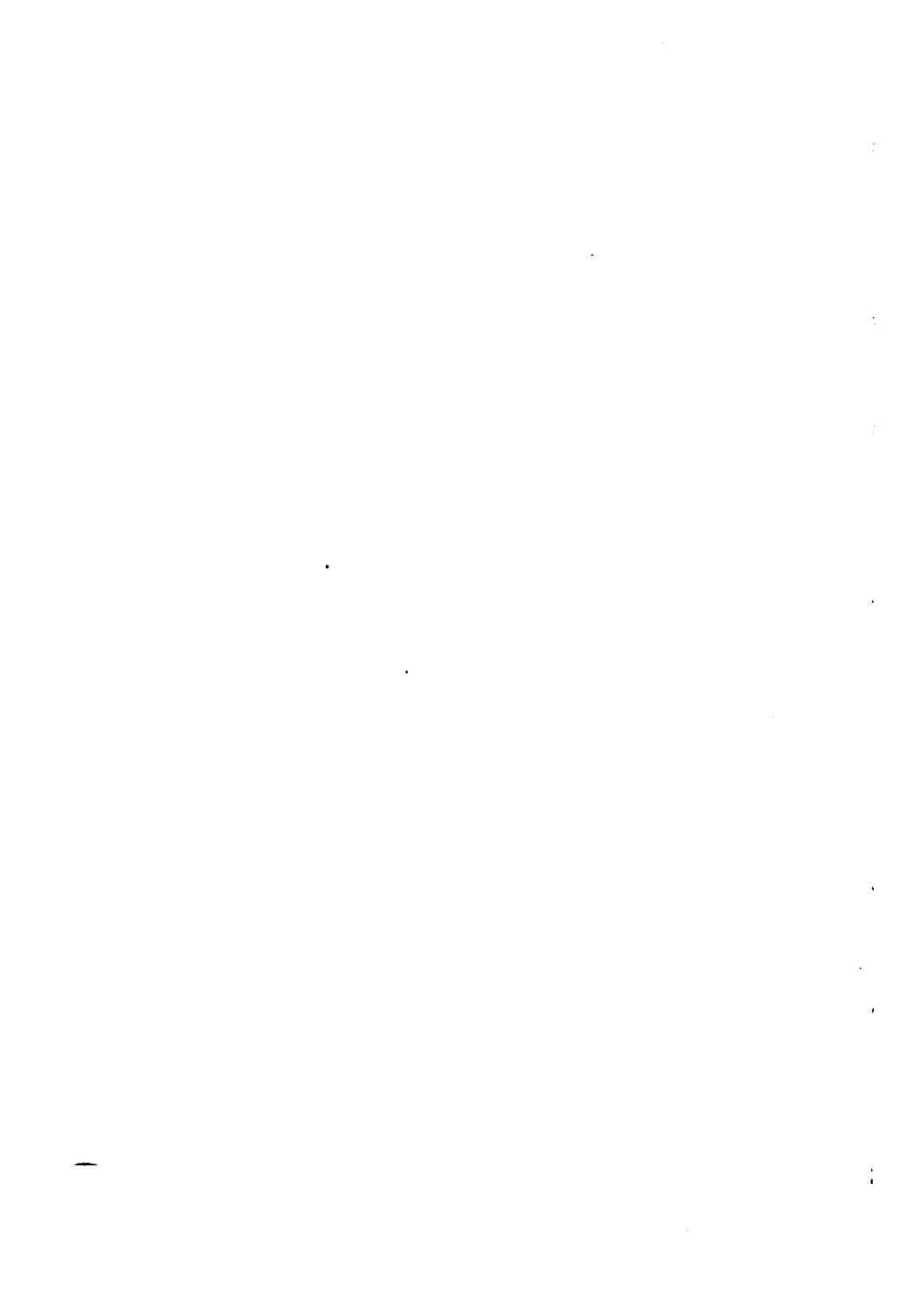
AN UNATTRACTIVE GIRL

thing until you brought home to me what it meant."

There was a new sweetness and dignity about her; but Mrs. Vermilye had gone beyond any such mild influences. Her bright hair quivered; her lips lost their color. "I have done everything," she wailed, "everything. You are of common blood. You are like your father!"

Frances went over, and took her hand very gently. "Do not let us speak of it again, mamma," she said. "The criticism will be all of me, not you. I engaged this morning to go with the Bentley-Morrisons as their nursery governess."

MR. VAN TWILLER'S STRANGE ALIBI



Mr. Van Twiller's Strange Alibi

THE snow had been falling for several minutes in little eddying gusts, and already an appreciable number of flakes were collecting on the cape of Miss Dorothy Dempsey's storm-coat, as she turned into Fifty-fourth street, at a swinging pace. On her head, framed by a soft halo of blown hair, in which the drops of moisture glistened here and there, a dark English walking-hat had slipped coquettishly to one side. Her cheeks were brilliant from the cutting wind and her eyes shone with exhilaration as she battled against the storm.

To insignificant Bertie Carey, advancing from the opposite direction, she appeared like a delightful vision; a delight considerably influenced, of course, by the fact that she belonged to the right "set" of visions, or Bertie, being so little a man, would not have looked a second time. Indeed, it is doubtful whether

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anything short of Miss Dorothy's genealogy on the maternal side would have induced him to give up his daily game of dominoes at the club, and wheel about to join her promenade with such urbane oblivion to the coolness of his reception.

And it is not likely that any other time Miss Dempsey would have resented his intrusion quite so hotly, but, unfortunately for him, her memory still retained with vigor a graphic description detailed to her only the previous evening by her cousin Jack, during which, excited to unusual emphasis by Carey's last *faux pas*, he had gone so far as to declare him "a consummate ass, not fit for decent society." Dorothy, having agreed with him in spirit, if not to the letter, felt that she was justified in taking strong measures on this occasion.

To walk down the avenue in his company, at an hour when all her dear four hundred friends would be abroad and glancing curiously from their brougham windows or over their shoulders, was a reflection upon her taste and discrimination which she was not ready to endure. Accordingly, before the preliminary greetings were fairly over, she

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was racking her brain for some way of dismissing him. In vain she meditated a dozen clever feminine manoeuvres that under any other circumstances or in any other locality would have been practicable. It was Carey himself who finally provided her with the means of escape.

"Awfully jolly, this unexpected pleasure of a stroll with you," he murmured, ignoring the gait that was rapidly reducing him to breathlessness.

"Yes indeed," returned Dorothy with false sincerity, "only it can't be a very long one, as I intend making a call in this block." This with unblushing effrontery, although well aware that she could walk on to the North River without finding a name on her list.

"A mutual friend?" inquired Carey.

"I think not."

"This must be the house then, since it is the last one."

Miss Dempsey gave a hasty, surreptitious glance at the window curtains, and evidently found some reassurance in their design.

"Thanks, yes. I suppose you will be at the Greys. Good afternoon."

"Oh, the Greys!" cried Carey, fired to

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fresh recollections. "Haven't you heard? Then, if I may, I will wait and see if your friend is in ; if not, we can continue our chat."

Now Miss Dorothy, being an independent and somewhat peremptory young lady, and having gone to all the trouble and risk of this subterfuge, was anything but pleased at a turn which left her unwittingly outwitted. But having gone so far, it was necessary to play the farce out, and, ascending the steps with a good deal of suppressed indignation, she pressed the bell. The door was promptly opened by a neat-capped maid.

"Is Dr. Robinson in ?" she inquired glibly, improvising the first name that came to her.

"I believe so, Ma'am, will you walk in ?"

For an instant Dorothy wavered in total dismay. This was a contingency for which she found herself completely unprepared. Then as her glance roved from the waiting Carey below to the girl who had stepped hospitably back, her resolution was taken ; to go in and explain on meeting the doctor that he was the wrong man seemed the simplest and most natural way out of the difficulty, and it would rid her of Carey, which was the main thing.

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The room into which she was ushered gave her as a first impression a sensation of cheer and comfort and good taste. It was fitted up as half office, half library, and a fire on the hearth shed its unstable light on two large chairs drawn up in a suggestively confidential manner, within the seductive radiance. Dorothy had made a mental comment of all this before becoming aware that one of these inviting chairs had an occupant, who had slowly risen and was now facing her with an open curiosity which he did not take the trouble to conceal. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, athletic young man, with a fine blond head, and did not in the least resemble the family physician of Dorothy's infantile ailments.

"I have been expecting you," he remarked calmly. "Won't you be seated?"

"But I called to see Dr. Robinson," explained Dorothy, fully expecting him to claim the distinction.

"I am very sorry," replied the young man imperturbably. "I am Dr. Robinson's nephew, Neil Sawtelle; he was very uncertain about your keeping this appointment. In fact, he went out hoping to meet you elsewhere,

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but left me to receive you if you came, and gave me entire authority to act in his stead."

In the course of her life it is probable that Miss Dorothy had never experienced such a variety of emotions. That it was a case of mistaken identity appeared plain, but how to account for her presence here without betraying her name and her reason for ringing the bell appeared a problem difficult of solution.

"I am sure there is some mistake," she stammered at length. "I am not the person Dr. Robinson expects. I simply wanted to consult him about a slight cold, and will call again."

"As my uncle is no longer a practicing physician, I am sure that cannot have been your object." He drew himself up to his full height, which Dorothy found rather overwhelming, and adopted a sterner tone.

"Do be seated," he repeated. "This is a very serious matter and must be treated seriously. Your acquaintance with my unfortunate cousin is as well known to me in all its details as to my uncle. Why try to deceive me?" [as Dorothy made an attempt for a hearing.]

"But I am not the person you think I am,"

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she declared with spirit. "I am Miss Dempsey."

"Indeed, and to what reason does my uncle, an old bachelor, owe the pleasure of this visit to-day? You must excuse my ignoring the cold."

He made a quick, convincing gesture as she started, hesitated—and was lost.

"You see it is useless," he went on. "I *must* insist on your remaining until you have answered a few questions; but I beg that you won't force me to be more impolite than you can help."

"When will Dr. Robinson return?"

"In an hour or two at the most. If you prefer waiting for him that will be even better," and he drew forward one of the easiest chairs.

"But I can't stay here two hours," cried Dorothy, now thoroughly alarmed and continuing to stand uncompromisingly.

"Nor is there the slightest necessity of it. Perhaps if I state the case it will enable you to see that you can use the same freedom with me as with the doctor, and also how little we require of you, provided you are honest, and how unpleasant the consequences may be

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if you evade. There have been great complications in two of the banks with which my cousin is connected, and actual theft has been committed. It has been proved past doubt at what hour the latter occurred, and suspicion has fallen in the highest places. My cousin will be implicated in the arrests unless it can be proved to the satisfaction of those interested that he was elsewhere at the time. By to-morrow, or at the farthest the next day, all New York may know of it. For some strange reason he refuses to account for himself. Now all we require is that you shall state under oath when and where you have seen him since Monday last."

"I don't know what you are talking about, and I don't wish to remain here any longer," protested Dorothy vehemently.

"Nonsense," replied Sawtelle almost roughly, interposing himself between her and the door. "My uncle gave me a description of you before he left. The idea of your denying that you know Albert Van Twiller, is absurd."

At the mention of the name Dorothy gave a little gasp of horror and amazement.

"Why, of course, I know him," she said

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unguardedly, and then seeing too late that she was only strengthening his mistake, she sunk into the nearest chair with a pitiful wail of distress which did not help matters.

"Oh, this is perfectly dreadful," she sobbed, forgetting her dignity and mopping her eyes with furtive dabs.

As for the blond giant on the rug, he looked scarcely less uncomfortable and ill at ease.

"I don't see but that you will have to wait till the doctor comes. If I should let you go it would only mean publicity and an appearance at court and all sorts of complications, which you ought to be as anxious to avoid as we are, Miss McKinney."

"I am not Miss McKinney."

"Well, my uncle will know who you are anyway."

"No, he won't," thought Miss Dempsey, and relapsed into a damp and protracted silence.

"I wonder if you would believe me," she said at last impulsively, turning on him a pair of moist, indignant eyes, "if I told you exactly how I did happen to come here."

"I am dreadfully sorry. I presume I

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have made a mess of it," he replied irrelevantly. "Perhaps we had better not try any more explanations till the doctor comes. You see, if I had known that you were in the least," reddening perceptibly, "the least like what you are, I never should have attempted a conversation."

As Dorothy found nothing to reply to this, another half hour passed, reducing her to a state of nervousness that went far toward confirming Sawtelle in his suspicions. At last, to the infinite relief of both, a key sounded in the latch, and bowing politely at her averted head, Sawtelle hastened into the hall.

Already the doctor, a hale, hearty man of fifty, was divesting himself of his snowy overcoat, and on catching sight of his nephew he began to speak in a cheery, excited voice.

"Such a day, my boy! The jade escaped me in spite of everything, and sailed on a Cunarder this noon. But that isn't the worst of it. No wonder Albert refused to say anything about her. He knew the whole thing would come out, and her testimony would n't be worth shucks, for you see he has married her, *married* her, my dear boy, do you understand?"

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As Sawtelle made no response, he glanced up hastily.

"Anything wrong?"

"Oh nothing," replied Sawtelle, in a dramatic whisper of despair, "excepting that I have kept the prettiest girl I ever saw in a state of torture for two hours. She would n't explain who she was at first, and seemed so agitated that I never had a doubt about its being the McKinney woman. You said she was dark."

"Black, staring eyes and big as an Amazon."

"You did n't say that. This one is small and thoroughbred to the fingertips."

"Well, well, we must see about it."

And, accompanied by his anxious nephew, the doctor bustled into the room with an apologetic good-will that somewhat disarmed the hauteur Dorothy was trying to assume.

"There has been a great mistake, my dear young lady, and one about which my nephew is deeply annoyed, but you mustn't blame him because he was only following out my instructions, although mistaken in the person. And now if you will tell me to what I owe the honor of this visit, I shall be very

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glad if I can retrieve in any way the discomfort you have undergone."

Thus brought to bay nothing was left for Dorothy but to make full confession.

"I am Miss Dempsey of No.—Fifth avenue," she began, but was unceremoniously interrupted by the doctor.

"Not Julien Dempsey's daughter? I knew he left a widow and child. Bless me, what a coincidence! We were chums, old chums at Yale, years ago—but go on, my child."

And then followed the whole ridiculous, mortifying tale, to which the doctor listened with open interest.

"I am glad you happened to come here," he said, not quite approvingly when she had finished.

"And I hope you are going to partially exonerate me," entreated Sawtelle, who had been preparing his line of defense during the recital.

"You can't fancy how humiliated I am or how tempted I was to believe you. If you had n't acknowledged your acquaintance with poor Van Twiller I should have weakened at the end."

"I do know Mr. Van Twiller, but the acquaintance is only a superficial one. I saw

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him last at Mrs. Lyle's ball, Wednesday evening, and sat with him some time, in the conservatory. I was upset because what you told me seemed so terrible."

"But Mrs. Lyle herself mentioned to me that he was not in the house ten minutes," interposed the doctor. "I think she was miffed. She fancied him for one of her girls, and now he has thrown himself away—poor Albert!"

"Oh I know how that happened. He told me all about it. He was going home with a Mr. Green, and, after he had made his adieux, Mr. Green decided to remain, so he sat out a dance with me and finally went off without waiting for him."

"And do you know what time that was?" inquired the doctor eagerly.

"About quarter or half after one, when my partner for the cotillion came up. We began to dance it about that time."

"Could you swear to it on paper?"

"Why yes, certainly."

"Then," shouted the doctor triumphantly, "he is vindicated, whether he explains or not. This will satisfy the directors so that they will drop proceedings where he is concerned. They know already that he is not guilty. It

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is as plain as daylight to me now. He didn't remember the exact time he left the Lyles', and thinking he was with this woman he has married, didn't want to attract our attention to her."

"And now, if you please, I should like to go home," remarked Miss Dempsey in a pathetic tone.

"Of course, my poor child, immediately. Neil, call a carriage. I will go with you myself and see your mother, also get your signature, if you will be so kind. It will straighten the affairs out wonderfully. Verily truth is stranger than fiction!"

As Dorothy swept from the room, Sawtelle made a brave if ineffectual attempt to attract her attention, but, as she steadily refused to be aware of his presence, his conscience permitted him to retain a small soaked wad, which was easily concealed in the palm of his hand. Subsequent events have led us to believe—so tender were his ministrations and pressures between the volumes of a new set of Ruskin—that in course of time it became less like a rag and more like a respectable handkerchief.

It is now over a year since these events occurred, and I hear that the article in ques-

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tion, together with a number of other worldly goods, is to be delivered to its rightful owner. How it all came about, those who have not begun their love affairs with a little animosity will never be able to conjecture, but I have it direct from the lips of the round and ever rubicund Carey himself.

"The latest engagement, my deah fellah, is Miss Dempsey's to a person named Sawtelle. Why, they say he has never been to a Patriarch's in his life!"

MISS QUINLEY'S STORY

Miss Quinley's Story

IF a woman has any latent intuition it cannot help being developed in a newspaper office. There, where a fallen dynasty or a flood or a suicide means, first of all, so many "stickfuls" of description, written in a limited number of minutes, one doesn't find time to arrive at conclusions logically and in order. But Miss Quinley was quick-witted anyway, and when she opened the door of the reporters' room one sparkling winter's morning, and pressed in against the blast of hot, smoky air that seemed glad of a chance to escape, it became instantly plain to her that something unusually important had happened. A man in his shirt-sleeves, who was busily engaged in bellowing directions down a tube, looked up as she entered and nodded.

"Big hotel explosion," he volunteered, laconically.

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The girl swung open the gate and walked directly over to the city editor's office, which was little more than a pen, made by partitioning off one corner. She was young and rather pretty, and her face had a firm, decided look as if she were living definitely and with a purpose. The city editor glanced at her over his shoulder as she cast a shadow on his paper, but still kept on writing.

"Good-morning, Miss Quinley," he said, in the sharp, irritable tone of a person whose already tense nerves have received another twist.

The girl took out several sheets of copy and laid them on the desk, and then went over and curled herself up in the window-seat. She was used to that tone of annoyance, but it always made her uncomfortable. There had been an almost armed neutrality between the city editor and herself from the beginning. In fact he made no pretense at concealing the fact that he considered her presence superfluous. His feeling was not entirely personal, perhaps, but it had seemed to him that, if the paper must have a woman, it should be an older one, before whom one wouldn't feel a brute if an unparliamentary word escaped and

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who need n't be considered at every turn, for Miss Quinley was of the kind, a man would unconsciously hesitate before sending to many places. For that reason he had opposed taking her on the regular staff and had been somewhat sensitive about it when the managing editor overruled him.

For her part, Miss Quinley had fallen into the habit of pitying him. Some one had told her his story after she had been there a few weeks, and since then she had found it possible to overlook certain slights which otherwise might have hurt her more. He was a man under a cloud, and people in talking over his past history were very diverse in their opinions as to whether it was a big one or a little one. Those who went back in their memories a dozen years recalled in him the popular, well-looking young fellow who came fresh from Harvard to business opportunities which, at his age, are only to be had by inheritance. Then had followed seasons when they elbowed him at balls or, possibly, were entertained at the intercollegiate boat-races on his yacht; when mothers had favored him with insinuating attentions and fathers pointed him out as a financial power. But, all

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at once, in the very height of this gay living and success there was an ugly rumor, followed by a sudden run on the bank with which he was connected and investigations that finally turned a finger of suspicion on him. The press took it up and judged him guilty; the sympathy of the community was against him; the affair promised to be an astonishing scandal, until, mysteriously and in some unknown way, the deficit was made good and the matter glossed over so that no criminal prosecution ever came of it. Hemans left the country for a year, and at the end of that time came back to a position on the *Evening News*. It struck his old friends, who would have been glad to get near to him again, but found themselves held at a distance, that this was a strange thing for him to choose at his age, and the men with whom he worked were of the same opinion; they missed that spirit of good-fellowship about him which is always to be found in a man who has risen from the ranks.

Presently, when he had finished making out his assignment-book, he turned to Miss Quinley.

"There's plenty of work to be done," he said, scowling. "This explosion changes the

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whole day. I must put the men right onto it. If you were a man now—but I don't see any thing that you would want to do."

"It isn't a question of whether I want to do it or not," replied the girl, drawing herself up with some spirit, "it is question of whether I can do it or not."

The city editor fingered a roll of pink assignment slips doubtfully.

"You might go down to the hospital and get a story about the wounded; it won't be very pleasant though," he said, tentatively.

Young Mason, who by reason of his youth and a certain ingenuousness of manner, was the most profitable of all the reporters to send among women-folk, came in at that instant and caught the last of the remark.

"It's the ghastliest thing that has happened in years," he put in, excitedly. "I've been down there, and only the rear walls are standing and the registers are buried and there's nobody to identify the dead when they are taken out, to say nothing of the living. The worst of it is a fire has started somewhere underneath. You can hear the engines pumping from here if you listen. Think of being buried under five stories of brick and

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run a chance of burning into the bargain. I say, we aren't so very far ahead on civilization when a thing like that can come to pass."

"There, you've said enough," interposed the city editor, who was watching Miss Quinley and saw her turn white. "Perhaps you had better not go," he said to her so kindly, that Mason left off what he was doing and stared at him as if to detect some ulterior sarcasm in the remark.

Young Mason enjoyed a position in the establishment which few ever attained. Nearly everybody liked him from the treasurer to the smallest office-boy, whom he had devoted a day to taking into the country. He had his specialties too, in which no one presumed to rival him; one was the absurd effeminacy of his manner, and the other a brutal, uncompromising directness about his written statements which made a good many innocent people shudder with surprise at the sight of certain confidential remarks in cold print.

"I wouldn't go, Miss Quinley; those poor wretches won't be a good sight," he advised her, boldly. They were the best of friends.

"Why, somebody must do it," she said,

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"and I don't suppose a man would bear it much better."

Hemans made a gesture implying that this discussion was out of place.

"Have your copy here by twelve o'clock," he said, cutting them short with a swift return of his old sharpness.

The whistles had blown for noon half an hour before and the greater part of the force not out on assignments had gone to lunch. Hemans tramped up and down between the double row of empty desks and consulted his watch every few minutes to the immediate confusion of Dicky Mason, who wanted to compose some fiery double headlines for an article written without a muzzle, but found himself furtively watching the city editor instead. He longed to suggest, in his impudent way, that if his chief had been born and bred to the printers' ink he would never have wasted nerve in useless fuming. Dicky felt strong and superior in the conviction that, under similar circumstances, he would have been found unconcernedly eating an apple.

"Two men late," the editor burst forth, feverishly, at length, "and Miss Quinley—Heaven knows where. Do you suppose she

MISS QUINLEY'S STORY

has forgotten all about the paper and gone off to start a subscription-list for the sufferers or fainted or lost her way? I suppose she *has* lost her way. I neglected to draw a map for her, as I generally do if I want to see her within the week. Really, since the management affords her at all I think the least they can do is to give her a brougham and footman."

"Oh, now," suggested Dicky, sweetly soothing, "she may have run into a lot of good material."

Hemans went back into his office and attacked a pile of proof for the sole purpose of getting his mind focussed. By and by the men began to straggle in and kept him occupied until after two, then he loomed up in the door-way once more and beckoned to Dicky Mason.

"I wish, if you can be spared, that you would go over to the hospital and look up Miss Quinley," he said. "I don't feel quite comfortable about her not coming back."

Dicky looked rueful.

"You see I was at work on that Blatherly case," he protested, "and I want it for the last edition, and can't one of the boys go

MISS QUINLEY'S STORY

down if you are in a hurry for the stuff?"

Hemans considered the suggestion for a moment and then shook his head. "I think there is something behind her staying that may be important," he said; "at all events you'd better get a little story on the chance of her failing us entirely."

Dicky began to get into his street coat with an expression of peace on his face and with vengeance in his heart. But, as he dawdled hunting for a match, there was a little rush in the hall and Miss Quinley came in almost running. She went straight up to the city editor and stopped in front of him. Her eyes were dark and her face chalky white. It was evident that she was laboring under the strongest excitement.

"Mr. Hemans I must see you, I must see you alone," she said, agitatedly.

Hemans stepped back and allowed her to pass into the office before him; there was a door by which he closed it at night, but in the day-time this always stood open. She motioned to him to shut it.

"What I am going to say belongs only to you," she explained.

Hemans seated himself and made a play

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at sorting some papers. It was plain that he did not mean to be impressed by the strangeness of her manner.

"Is your story ready?" he inquired, curtly.

"No," replied the girl promptly, though her voice trembled, "the hospital story can wait; it isn't perishable, but the one I'm going to tell you is. I don't know quite how to begin it either," she continued, uncertainly, "and if I fail in telling it as it should be told I hope you will be patient with me." She paused and swallowed once or twice as if she found it hard to breathe. "I went over to the hospital," she said, "and they were bringing the wounded over in ambulances as fast as they dug them out of the ruins. Some of them were half-crazed or maudlin from fear; and some of them were bruised and burned past recognition, and some of them," she added, tremulously, "were dead. I was waiting there when they brought in a young woman; she had been pinned down by a beam, they said, and her back was broken. Because she was suffering so frightfully they didn't try to move her much, but just laid her down on a mattress in a side hall. I suppose

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she must have noticed me with my pencil and paper, for after a little a nurse came and said that she wanted to speak to me."

"This is very interesting," broke in Hemans coolly, "but I'm afraid I haven't time to hear it quite all now."

The girl let her gaze fall full on him for a second ; then opening a chatelaine bag which she wore at her side, took out a curiously wrought silver key-ring and laying it on the desk shoved it towards him with the tips of her fingers. The pupils of the man's eyes dilated suddenly.

"Shall I go on ?" asked the girl.

"Yes," replied the city editor.

"The woman suffered a good deal. It was hard for her to speak ; that's the reason I've been gone so long. She began by asking whether I was a reporter, and when I said yes, if I knew you and would take you a message. She didn't give me her name at first, but she made me promise that I would not repeat what she told me except to you. She talked rather incoherently and I had to gather things little by little. She said that she had been married, but her husband was dead, and then explained how they had not

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lived very happily together. She was ambitious and demanded more than he could give, and he didn't sympathize with her, but called her frivolous, although he always loved her and was good to her and the children. She wished you to remember that he left two children. But at one time he lost money and she grew discontented and the relations between them kept growing more and more strained until—" she hesitated and glanced at Hemans appealingly, but he sat in stolid silence, with his hands clasping the sides of his chair and refused to help her out with a question, "until there was—" she looked away with that womanly instinct which shrank from seeming to watch him—"a robbery in a bank. I won't go into all she said about it; it isn't necessary. It was for a very large sum, and the fault was finally settled on one man, the youngest to hold a responsible position and the one who was leading the life that demanded the most money. There was some circumstantial evidence, too. They found a key proved to be his by a mark worn in it from a corrugated key-ring which he used to carry, and when they tried to compare the key with the ring, he claimed to have lost it.

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This was the particular thing that made his relatives dread to have a public trial; and so they persuaded him to take some of his personal property and make up the amount stolen; then he resigned and went away. At the same time there was another man in the bank who gave up his position." Miss Quinley leaned forward and challenged his gaze direct now, and there was almost a thrill of triumph in her voice. "The woman over there," she said, indicating the direction with a wave of her hand, "is his wife. They lived in Rome until he died, and then some longing made her drift back to Boston. She didn't acknowledge any definite object in coming, but she said when you saw that key-ring it would be all the confession you would need. But you mustn't blame her husband, for it wasn't as if she hadn't tempted him; she was sure he would have been an honest man without her. At first she was very hard about it and said you could never touch the money anyway; a good part of it had gone in stocks and the rest was safely put by for her boys. She asked me to tell you especially about the boys; they are little fellows yet and alone in a big school in London. She spoke quite calmly about dying and leav-

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ing them, and how much better they would be in the end without her."

Miss Quinley paused and putting up her hands loosened the little fur boa about her neck as if it choked her. Hemans had changed his position and was sitting with his elbows on his knees and his head supported between his clenched fists.

"There isn't much more," she said, gently. "If you will go at once, while she still has the courage of her resolution, she has promised to sign something that will clear you from any suspicion; but she said you must come quickly while she had strength to do it; that perhaps you would realize what it was to have a name people turn aside from, and how hard it must be for a mother to go out of the world leaving a curse on her children with her last word."

The girl swayed to and fro in the force of her emotion. "I asked the doctor, and he said that she couldn't last later than five o'clock," she said, brokenly.

Hemans raised his head. His face wore a softened expression. Presently without speaking he glanced at the clock, and rising, opened the door of the office.

MISS QUINLEY'S STORY

Every man glanced up involuntarily and surreptitiously from his work. Things must be getting very queer, indeed, they thought, for the city editor to shut himself up with Miss Quinley and let copy pile up when the last edition was just upon him. He began hastily skimming over the scrawled pages, touching up and crossing out with his blue pencil. Miss Quinley watched him with impatience.

"I think five o'clock was the latest," she ventured, timidly.

Hemans kept on stamping copy and handing it out to the boy without immediately replying.

"Why, I'm not going," he said, at last. "You don't suppose I could deliberately send two little shavers that never did anything worse than live, through—the—through what I've been through, do you?"

Miss Quinley started up with a soft, moved little cry, but the city editor moved away without giving her a chance to speak.

Dicky Mason, going in a few minutes later, found her crying in a pitiful, exhausted sort of way.

"Oh, I say it's a shame!" he exclaimed,

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sympathetically. "I was sure it would be worse than you expected."

The girl controlled herself with a violent effort and made a motion with her lips as if to say something.

"No, it wasn't worse ; it was better," she said at last.

THE CHRISTENING OF JANET GRACE

The Christening of Janet Grace

THE three chief mourners walked 'cross lots from the burying-ground and up through the orchard, home. The mother and the sister-in-law of the dead woman went in front, stepping with prim self-consciousness engendered by their new black. Occasionally they spoke together about the funeral in low tones, but Lemuel was not included in the conversation. Nor did he make any attempt to join in it, although he followed directly in their wake, his long, shambling gait reduced to something like precision by the decorousness of their example.

The keen fall weather had held off until late this year, and the overripe fruit lay in wasting abundance under the trees. In the intermediate spaces the scant, uneven crop of autumn grass still stood freshly erect, save

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where the fruit-gatherers had tracked devious, undulating paths. It was along these that the little company made its solemn way.

When the women reached the foot of the offset, they turned as if by prearrangement, and Sarah addressed her brother.

"You sit right down here, Lemuel, and rest awhile," she said. There was an insistent note in her voice, roused, even under the present sad circumstances, by his easy-going nature. "Mrs. Backwell and I'll see that everything is made comfortable in the house."

The elder woman had already begun to ascend the irregular stone steps.

"Yes, we will," she called back, with kind impatience. "Come, Sarah, the baby'll need us."

Lemuel stood and watched them, staring dully, until their swaying black dresses had disappeared. Then his whole body seemed to relax; his shoulders drooped forward; his hands went into his trousers pockets. His ordinary, phlegmatic countenance, now dignified by a genuine sorrow, shone out with strange whiteness under the black brim of his derby hat. After a moment he turned

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mechanically and seated himself on his favorite stone beside the horse-trough.

He was aware, quite as clearly as if she had put it into words, that his sister had left him outside to grieve. Sarah had always shown a very nice sense of the fitness of things. He knew that it was on her suggestion that the hired man from their father's was to do his share of the evening work ; she had foreseen that he would want this opportunity to think about Belinda. And yet, try as he might, he could not seem to remember anything more about her than the minister had recalled by his words at the service. What a good, dutiful wife she had been to him for ten years ; how frugal in all her ways, amiable in all her actions ; even in this sudden taking off spiritually prepared, as few are, to go.

The soft, regular tread of the cows coming up from the pastures reached his ear without meaning ; he heard the familiar bustle and noise beginning inside the barn as something very far off ; gradually his head dropped forward on the arms which he had folded on the trough's edge.

Presently there arose, above the sound of the flowing milk and the monotonous chewing

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of cuds, the shrill wailing of a young child. It acted upon Lemuel like a shock. He raised his head and glanced about with a startled, bewildered expression. "The baby! the baby!" he repeated, blankly. For the first time he began to ask himself what the existence of the child meant. The grief which a moment before had seemed so vague, so moderate, at once began to define itself. *She* had been taken and the child had been left—this helpless, undesired baby girl. A sudden unreasoning rebellion rose within him that, in spite of her baby innocence, she had robbed him of all he loved best.

One of the hired men now came to the door of the barn and paused on seeing Lemuel. His stolid face expanded in a look of mingled curiosity and sympathy. Lemuel, unaccustomed as he was to be in any way conspicuous, flushed slowly through his roughened skin.

"Here, let me take those," he exclaimed, with embarrassed haste, extending his hands for the brimming milk-pails which the man held.

The tea-table was set when he entered, and Sarah and Mrs. Backwell were moving about with an air of occupation that would have deceived only a man.

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Sarah's features, unlike those of her brother, were all prominent. Her wide, firm mouth and sharp eyes more than fulfilled the promise of her angular, uncompromising bearing. Authority appeared to radiate from her. Mrs. Backwell, on the contrary, although several years older, still retained a little of the mellow charm of love and maternity. Her hair, of a yellowish-white color, drawn back from her forehead in regular waves, softened the lines of age; excitement or fatigue still tinged the thin skin with a second bloom. A stranger might not have detected the strength of will indicated by the tense downward curve of the lips.

Both women watched Lemuel furtively from under their lowered lids as he approached his chair. There were but three places laid, and each waited in breathless expectancy to be summoned to the head of the table. They waited so long that at last Lemuel glanced around in puzzled inquiry.

"Aren't you ready?" he said.

Mrs. Backwell was near to the side seat, and she sank nervously into it. Sarah, dragging up a chair opposite, began to reach across for the tea-things. Lemuel faced the open

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space, but he did not once look up. The women, however, continued to eye each other with awkward dignity. Each was aware that the other had hoped to take the precedence.

When the meal was about half finished, the dismal cry which had so overcome Lemuel in the afternoon sounded in the room overhead. Sarah and Mrs. Backwell both started up.

"I think I'd better go," said Mrs. Backwell.

"No," declared Sarah, positively. "Your tea 'll get cold."

But Mrs. Backwell was not so easily managed. She remained standing, and, after an instant's hesitation, Sarah joined her, and they went up together. In a little while the sounds of distress ceased, and Lemuel could hear their voices in renewed discussion. "I will carry her," his sister was saying. "No," advised Mrs. Backwell, "let her stay in the cradle." A queer, bumping noise on the staircase followed, and in a moment the door opened and the two women entered. They bore between them a curious old wooden cradle, built on low rockers. Outside it was painted a dull and gloomy green, but within

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its warm depths the baby lay pink and drowsy. They set the cradle down at Lemuel's feet with almost the air of conquerors.

"She'll be your comfort," said the grandmother. She spoke joyously, as one whose own consolation had already begun.

But Lemuel averted his eyes hastily from the cradle.

"Take her away!" he cried, rising so violently that his chair was overturned. Then, uncomfortable at having made such a show of feeling, he moved toward the door. "You and Sarah do what you think is right by her," he added, more quietly, from the threshold.

From that day on neither grandmother nor aunt made any attempt to force the baby on Lemuel's attention. Before long, in fact, each became so absorbed in her individual authority and love for the child that Lemuel's claim dropped entirely out of sight. In the same way they gradually ranked him the least important member of the household. He came and went methodically, neither questioning nor being questioned. The baby never appealed to him as in need of his care. She was surfeited with attentions by the two women whose lives had become an unacknow-

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ledged competition on her account. It was almost pitiful to see how tenacious they were of each small privilege. They had come, by tacit agreement, to divide the care of the baby about equally. They bathed and dressed her, for instance, on alternate mornings. For a time each forbore, with admirable self-control, any criticism of the other's ways. In Sarah this was a conscious act of justice; with Mrs. Backwell it was wholly instinctive delicacy. Neither realized the depth of affection which the child had roused in the other. To Mrs. Backwell Sarah appeared hard and unresponsive, sitting upright as she would for hours with the baby held across her knee. The elder woman was not fine enough to catch the soft light of gratification which shone on Sarah's face if by chance the baby hand tightened about her finger. Sarah, on her part, was out of all patience with the rocking and crooning and caressing in which Mrs. Backwell indulged. But so far as the baby herself was concerned, they managed to agree in magnifying many of the commonest signs and habits of child nature.

They were alike proud and anxious to display her upon all occasions. The neigh-

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bors, after a little, did not disguise their annoyed amusement at the absorption which would make both women break off in the middle of an interesting bit of gossip in order to watch the baby crow. Mothers who did not know what it was to miss their thriving families stared at the fervor which possession brought to these two self-centered lives. Moreover, this feeling was deepened by a secret insecurity. Although Lemuel submitted to being set aside, to having his comfort neglected and his opinion ignored, each dreaded lest he might some day rouse himself and put the baby definitely into the charge of the other. Each had a comfortable home, but neither so much as suggested, in Lemuel's presence, the possibility of returning, although they aimed frank hints at each other in private.

"Aint you afraid your wall-paper 'll mildew, shut up so long?" Sarah would inquire pointedly.

"Mine's a dry cellar," her companion would reply, imperturbably.

But later in the day she could be heard to remark: "How your stepmother must miss what help you've been able to give her

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in the salting-down—though I suppose your weak back hindered your being of much use over the barrels!”

In spite of these significant encounters, however, the friction between them did not become open until the question of naming the baby was raised. The baby, now three months old, was, as a neighbor expressed it, “spindling;” and, although both Sarah and Mrs. Backwell refused to admit this fact, they were for once united in thinking that to delay in christening even the most robust child, beyond this age, was in the highest degree improper. But here their amiable agreement ended.

From the first, family feeling and denominationalism complicated the contest. Mrs. Backwell admitted that the baby’s nose was like Lemuel’s, but the other features, she avowed, were Backwell—pure Backwell. Sarah, while granting this only for the sake of argument, maintained that it was of slight consequence, since in disposition the baby took wholly after its father’s family. Each began by making a stand that the baby should bear only some name of her family; but, as the weeks went on and no conclusion

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seemed likely to be reached without assistance, they agreed finally to ask Lemuel's opinion. Sarah recognized, indeed, that his appreciation of the child was so comparatively slight that she could hardly hope for sympathy in her extreme clannishness. And, as she had expected, he was judicially impartial. Pressed to some decision, he proposed a compromise; and in due course the neighborhood was informed that henceforth the baby would be called Janet Grace, in honor of both grandmothers. In speaking of her familiarly, however, Sarah used the name of Grace, and Mrs. Backwell that of Janet.

As for the baptism, alas! that proved to be no nearer settlement than at the outset. Mrs. Backwell was of the Methodist persuasion, Sarah of the Presbyterian. Having in a measure surrendered on the name, each was the more strongly determined to uphold what she considered her religious rights. Nor was this by any means wholly self-assertiveness. Deep and inherited convictions, and minds trained in an atmosphere of narrow prejudice, inspired all their discussions.

Before long it began to be rumored about quietly that Mrs. Backwell and Sarah were

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"nearly coming to blows" about the baby's baptism. Later, the ministers of both denominations called, and, whether in innocence or not, touched on the subject tentatively. After their visit the disagreement became public. Even the natural reticence of both women could not withstand the temptation to let their righteous intolerance be known. Lemuel, when appealed to in turn by each, was found to be provokingly indifferent.

"What are you in such a hurry about?" he inquired, with his characteristic drawl. "I aint much on creeds, and I guess you both know it."

Affairs were, therefore, at this point when the baby finished her fifth month.

Lemuel had spent the day in the back-breaking work of sorting apples. Formerly Belinda had been in the habit of bringing her sewing to the head of the cellar stairs, and by occasional remarks had shortened the hours of his labor.

To-night his loneliness and fatigue sent him early to bed.

It must have been about midnight when he was awakened from his heavy slumber by the loud rattling of his door-latch. He roused

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himself and saw through the blur of sleep his sister Sarah half-dressed and holding a lighted candle above her head as she peered toward the bed.

"Oh, Lemuel," she cried, seeing him awake, "do come. The baby! the baby is dying!"

The baby was lying on the large bed in the front room when Lemuel entered. Mrs. Backwell and Sarah hung over her from opposite sides. By the light of the kerosene lamp, which fell full on her face, he could see how thin she was; he wondered that he had never noticed it before. After he had been there a moment her suffering began again. Fierce tremors racked the tiny frame, and then left it motionless, rigid. Lemuel watched spellbound until he could endure no more.

"Sha'n't I go for the doctor?" he managed to ask.

Mrs. Backwell shook her head.

"I guess it's too late," she said. Her voice sounded hollow.

Suddenly Sarah raised her face from beside the pillow; it was set with a look of agonized recollection.

"She's going," she cried. "She's going,

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and she's never been baptized; she has never been given to the Lord. She's *lost*!"

For an instant there was complete silence. Then Mrs. Backwell covered her eyes with her hands.

"Go, Lemuel, bring a minister—either one," she entreated, sobbing.

Lemuel's gaze was set on the baby. After a brief hesitation, however, he wheeled about and left the room. But almost immediately he surprised the two women by returning.

Even at this awful moment they could not help noticing that some great change had come over him. His bearing was animated by resolution; his lips were set sternly. In his hand he held the purple-and-white-sprigged bowl that had been a part of his mother's wedding china. Going over to the washstand, he partly filled it with water. The women at the bedside watched him aghast.

"I guess there aint much time to lose," he said, firmly, turning toward them, but his arm trembled. "I guess I'd better not waste it going for any minister. She's my child!" It was astonishing—the thrill of ownership roused in his voice. "I think the Lord'll

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agree that I've got as good a right to give her to him as anybody."

He stepped forward as he spoke, but Mrs. Backwell and Sarah had risen, and now drew together as one person in their frightened protest.

"Oh, Lemuel, you wouldn't!" gasped his sister.

Mrs. Backwell made a feeble attempt to hold him by the arm. Yet both paused and involuntarily bowed their heads when, clasping the bowl in one hand, Lemuel raised the other solemnly.

"Janet Grace," he repeated with unsteady earnestness, "I give you to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be called by that name in the kingdom of heaven."

He touched the baby's forehead with clumsy reverence, spilling some of the water on her face. She opened her eyes and looked directly at him; she was lying more quietly. Mrs. Backwell and Sarah approached the bed again.

"Now I will go for the doctor," said Lemuel.

When the doctor arrived, an hour later, the baby was sleeping with long, even breaths.

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He listened to the explanations given, and nodded his head with unconcerned intelligence. Both the women and Lemuel avoided each other's eyes a little consciously as he pronounced the convulsions a result of teething and not dangerous. When the opinion had been given, Sarah rose, and, taking the purple-sprigged bowl from the mantel, poured the water which it contained on the barren vines outside the window. Then she wiped it carefully and replaced it on the shelf, with a sidelong look at Lemuel. It was evident that she intended to imply her reassertion and disapproval.

Lemuel walked out to the gate with the doctor through the chilly, spreading dawn.

"To speak plainly," said the doctor, in reply to Lemuel's questions, "your baby gets too much coddling."

The words sent Lemuel back to the house pondering. He was roused—roused at last as neither of the women within had dreamed possible. When the baby awoke he was present, and, mindful of the doctor's warning, would let neither Sarah nor Mrs. Backwell lift her from the bed. He himself sat beside her, his expression moved and tender.

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His rough hands faltered from time to time caressingly over the coverlid ; and when the women, alarmed at his obstinacy, withdrew with offended bearing to consult together, he stooped and pressed his first kiss on the baby's thin brown hair.

Before the week was over no small interest was excited by the fact that Mrs. Backwell and Sarah had returned to their homes. The doctor alone smiled wisely when it was mentioned to him.

"Lemuel will bring up the child himself," he said.

A SECEDING PURITAN

A Seceding Puritan

MISTRESS Winterbourne having chosen that time of early dusk when work was lightest, to wait upon her niece, sat on the wide settle beside the fireplace, fixed resolution in every line of her shrewd, thin face. Faith, on her knees, bent from time to time and, pressing her lips, blew the iridescent flames of the salt driftwood until at last, having kindled the sturdier oak, the whole room stood revealed in a steady glow.

This done, she returned to a low stool on the opposite side of the hearth, without glancing in her aunt's direction. It was apparent from the attitude of both women that there had been ill feeling between them.

"Thou wert ever a forward lass," the elder woman broke out presently, "liking thine own ways better than those of thine elders."

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The girl moved uneasily, her dark head stiffening a little on her slender throat, and a rush of color flooding her cheeks, but she made no reply.

"Thou seest thou has naught to say to advocate thy Popish forms," Mistress Winterbourne continued, pointing as she spoke, to a half-finished wreath of evergreen lying in her niece's lap.

Faith's fingers closed over the wreath defiantly, and she clasped it to her as if her aunt would have taken it away by force.

"Methinks there is little left to say but hath been said, unless thou wouldst have me forget the respect I owe," she said quietly, but her voice shook.

"Chut! thou showest that respect but poorly," the elder woman replied, shrugging her shoulders with the last remnant of vivacity that had survived from her French ancestry. "Thou mindst not my warning; all wastefulness was forbid in the community last year. Wouldst flaunt thy silliness in the very eyes of his excellency?"

"Nay, nay," Faith assured her, her manner suddenly softening almost to one of appeal. "Mayhap I am but a forward lass as thou

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sayest, but is not each conscience to be its own guide in the household? What harm if I gladden the children with sight of the things to which they are used?" and she indicated with a gesture a boy and a girl who were playing contentedly on the other side of the table.

Mistress Winterbourne did not respond immediately, and Faith went on fitting bunches of the greens and carefully tying them with a bit of knotted twine. Her aunt having lowered her eyelids over her prominent blue eyes appeared to be thinking. When she spoke again her voice had lost its menacing ring.

"Think you," she said with a sly smile that compressed her narrow lips more than ever, "think you that His Excellency will give consent that any of his kin should look upon a maid that setteth such an example?"

When she had finished speaking she did not look up at once, but smoothed out the folds of her coarse skirt complacently, the smile still lingering. Then as Faith remained silent she raised her eyes with ill-concealed triumph. She could see that the girl had grown pale.

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"Thou findest where the shoe pinches, maid," she said, maliciously. "When 'tis a choice between Reuben and thy baubles thou art quick to give up."

"And thou, methinks, art over-quick to claim what is not thine," Faith retorted.

She had risen at her aunt's first words, scattering the greens far and wide over the floor. The children, conscious that something unusual was going on, peered curiously out from under the table and then shrank back again, alarmed by their sister's white face and blazing eyes.

Mistress Winterbourne now stood up also, gathering her long cape about her shoulders.

"Peace!" she said shrilly; but there was no sincerity in her tone. To her antagonistic nature, starved but not subdued by the hard discipline of primitive life, the storm she had raised was like wine.

The two women remained facing each other for several instants, the girl making a visible effort to control her anger.

"Thou hast no right," she said, at length, haughtily. "He has given neither me nor thee the right to take his name thus freely."

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"Peace! 'tis common talk that he looks thy way," Mistress Winterbourne declared calmly, fastening up her cape in readiness for going. "Thou wilt not be so fierce when thou art wiser," she added, moving toward the door.

On the threshold she paused and looked over her shoulder at the children whose curiosity had gotten the better of their fear. "'Tis likely, methinks, thou wilt give up Reuben for an hour's idle frolic with them," she mocked, "and 'tis not time ill spent if I have brought thee to sense."

"And I care for no heart that cannot see the good in mine," the girl retorted with quick bitterness that showed the fear which her aunt's taunt had raised. Turning to the children she gathered the little girl to her in a resolute embrace. "Thou shalt have thy Christmas, sweethearts," she said passionately.

Mistress Winterbourne, hearing, went out and gave the door a violent slam behind her.

That evening Faith had taken her dishes to a distant corner of the kitchen and was preparing to wash them when she saw her father making ready to go out.

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This was no uncommon occurrence, for Simon Bartlett's opinion carried weight in the community, and his presence was much sought by younger men. But to-night she watched him take down his coat from its peg with a strange fluttering of the heart. Her aunt's words, repeated over and over again in her mind, had ceased to be simply prophetic, and were becoming fact.

She knew that in an hour, if he followed his usual custom, Reuben would be there, and the thought of being alone with him was more than she could endure patiently. She advanced within the radius of the candle-light.

"Thou needst not go out to-night, Father?" she stammered.

"I am bid to the Common House," he said simply.

"Is it a council?"

"Nay, 'tis but to decide the matter of the wood-cutting."

"Then, prithee stop at home with me."

Simon raised his eyes under their shaggy brows and looked at his daughter in amazement. Faith fell back into the shadow at his questioning glance.

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"Thou art not afeard?" he said incredulously.

"Nay, nay, 'twas but idle talk, mind it not," she replied hastily, already regretting having given way to her impulse.

Simon hesitated.

"Wouldst have me send thine aunt to keep thee company?"

"Nay, nay," she said with such vehemence that the old man chuckled softly, a gleam of humor lighting his sober countenance.

"Perchance thou wilt not be left quite alone," he said consolingly, with a meaning air.

When he had gone Faith finished her work quickly and going over to the fireplace began to arrange the few stools and the table with those deft touches which make even a barren place homelike. From the shelf she took down the finished wreath and hung it conspicuously on one corner of the settle; then with a bowl of cracked nuts and a little pick she sat down in her accustomed seat and began busily picking out the meats.

Her ear, tense from listening and waiting, heard the approaching footsteps creaking on the fresh-fallen snow long before they

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reached the house. When the expected knock came, however, she hesitated an instant before responding.

A violent gust of wind required the strength of Reuben's shoulder to close the door, and set the candle flickering. Faith stood up with a little shiver that might have been either cold or nervousness.

"Good e'en," she said stiffly, and then seated herself again with one shoulder turned toward him.

The young man came forward, intent at first on shaking the snow from his clothes. His figure, naturally tall and vigorous, had developed with labor a fine sinewy build; his skin was ruddy from exposure. As he stood beside the girl smiling down upon her, she seemed, in spite of all her dignity and spirit, a slight, frail creature.

"Art in such haste, Mistress, thou hast no word for thy friend?" he said.

"Methinks thou hast had two words already," she replied coldly.

He stared for a moment half-piqued, half-angered, then he turned and threw himself down on the settle.

"Two words is scarce enough to warm a

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man's heart," he returned presently, as she still remained silent.

She bent low over her nuts at this, her expression softening; once or twice she made a motion with her lips as if to speak.

"Thou seest," she murmured at last, "I am busy with my Christmas cakes."

"Christmas!" Reuben repeated the word with an air of suddenly recollecting. "Surely 'tis to-morrow and a hard day's work thy father is mapping out for us to-night, I warrant."

The girl's face crimsoned painfully. In her sensitive, overwrought state she was ready to twist his words into any meaning that seemed to justify the fear over which she had been brooding.

"Thou hast no need," she retorted, drawing herself up "to flaunt thine own virtues. As for me—I make no pretense. I have ever held that much of the old was good, and not all of the new."

"Thou art but a sad, poor Puritan," Reuben responded solemnly, but there was a tender expression in his eyes which belied his words.

"Hadst not best seek them that are bet-

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ter then?" she returned promptly, flashing a scornful glance on him, although her cheeks had begun to lose their color.

"Nay——"

"I am but sorry company!" she interrupted wilfully.

Reuben, unconscious of any cause for this perversity, felt his anger rising. His bearing became suddenly as distant as her own.

"If thou wouldst be rid of me, 'twere very quickly done," he said.

After that neither of them spoke until he reached the door; then he said "Good e'en" gruffly, but Faith could not reply because of the sobs swelling in her throat. When he was fairly outside she covered her eyes and wept bitterly.

She knew his inflexible principles and his strong will, and never for an instant doubted that he had condemned her and was glad to seize the opportunity she gave him to leave her.

The next morning Faith was obliged to go to the other end of the street on an errand. As she passed along, her mind turned sadly inward. She was at first unconscious of the

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things going on about her, but after a little it flashed upon her that those whom she met regarded her strangely. She thought first of her gown, and if anything was amiss with her appearance.

Several doors were open in spite of the rigor of the weather, and she might easily have reassured herself by stopping at one of them, but the glances that met her greeting had so much of curiosity and so little of kindness in them that she felt repelled. On the threshold of the next house to the last, her Aunt Winterbourne stood waiting, having evidently watched her approach.

"Wilt come in and rest a bit?" she urged so cordially that Faith felt an instant's regret for her bitterness of the night before. She remembered how her father often said that her own mother had been Mistress Winterbourne with the sting drawn, and the thought made her forgiving.

"'Tis well," the elder woman continued, when they were both seated, "that our friends should see thy aunt has still a kind word for thee. 'T is an ill thing for a maid to stand alone against public opinion."

"And how do I stand alone, Aunt?"

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"Thou canst ask me after yesterday's behavior?"

"Public opinion was not informed of my actions unless by thyself. I had no thought to affront others by publicity."

Mistress Winterbourne lowered her eyelids with the self-satisfied expression which Faith had come to learn meant nothing pleasant.

"'T is well to gibe at thy poor aunt," she said, "but thou forgettest Reuben."

"Reuben never told." Faith's voice rang out with a loyal confidence sufficient to convict her aunt; but Mistress Winterbourne only laughed silently.

"Reuben never told?" she mocked. "So Reuben never told? And what think you were my few words dropped carelessly, compared to thy lover's actions? 'T is no easy task to conceal. Silas Hampton saw him come and go with scarce ten minutes between."

The walk home seemed endless to Faith. She made an effort to bear herself proudly, feeling that wondering and perhaps ill-natured glances lurked in every house.

A group of girls of her own age stood gossiping in front of one of the doors, but as

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she approached they dispersed with furtive glances in her direction. Near her own house she met the Elder, his eyes sunken and stern ; she increased her speed so that it would not be easy for him to intercept her.

When she was again in her kitchen, the sight of the children playing happily with the greens and cookies which were costing her so much seemed even harder to bear than the open street. She moved her spinning wheel into the only other room in the house and sat down in the cold to work.

When her father returned in the afternoon earlier than usual, she emerged blue and chilled, and moved about caring for his wants and the children's, unconscious that his face expressed unusual excitement. Simon watching her rather wistfully seemed anxious to speak of something, and yet unable.

"If thou wilt give me a bite now," he said, at last, "I must be off again directly. 'T is a search expedition, and I would have thee bear up, my child; 't is none other than Reuben."

"Reuben!" Faith raised her head bravely, but her dilating eyes looked out of a drawn, white face.

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Her father regarded her with a sort of homely admiration, although any further sign of sympathy would have been impossible to his reserve.

"Reuben was with four others hunting at noon," he continued. "After that he and the dog wandered off and naught has been seen of them since. Now maid, my stick; 't is no time to loiter."

Great wind-clouds darkened the sky early that night; fierce gusts set the trees creaking outside and came wailing down the wide chimney. After her father had gone Faith crouched on the hearth listening and trembling. The children moved restlessly in their bed in the next room, and she rose and closed the door so that nothing might disturb the stillness.

Then she returned to her vigil.

An hour went by and no one passed the house, then another hour; Faith heard a man shout at the other end of the village, and her heart leaped, but silence soon followed. Once something hit against the barrel at the corner of the house with a thud, and she did not breathe again until a regular patter on the crust betrayed a neighbor's dog.

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The relief party had been gone three hours when Faith detected a distant sound that presently defined itself in approaching steps. The party had gone from the other end of the village, but as she realized, it might have made a circuit. As the steps came nearer and nearer, however, they proved to be those of a solitary man; he tramped sturdily with long strides that brought him on at a great pace.

Faith, standing behind the closed door, was in an agony to call out to whoever this might be and ask if there was any news of Reuben, but a sense of shame held her silent. There probably was not one in the community by this time save her own father, who did not know that Reuben had left her.

The steps were very near now, for an instant they seemed to have gone by, then all at once Faith realized that they had stopped altogether. She hardly waited for the knock, to throw the door open and peer out, but blinded as she was by the firelight she could see nothing.

"Well, sweetheart, may I come in? Thou wouldst not turn a dog out such a night as this?"

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At the sound of the familiar voice, the girl fell back as if she had been struck, and the young man followed her into the room stamping the snow from his boots.

For a moment she stood and looked at him, her lips quivering.

"Why, Reuben, thou hast torn thy cloak," she faltered between laughing and crying, and Reuben emboldened by her helplessness, leaned over and gathered her into his arms without further explanation.

After a time she grew calmer and withdrew herself with modest blushes, the soft tendrils of brown hair that had for once escaped their prim bands, hanging about her lovely face.

"We thought thee lost Reuben," she said with such a feeble attempt at severity that the young man laughed aloud.

"'T were worth while to be so, in fact, to find such a welcome," he rejoined.

Half an hour later as the young pair sat there with tender, contented eyes that saw nothing but each other, the door was hastily thrown open without warning, and Mistress Winterbourne's face eager and heated with bad tidings was thrust in.

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"The search is back, and thy father bade me tell thee," she began, and then raised her hands with a half-shriek at the sight of Reuben who rose and came forward smiling.

"Wilt come in, Aunt?" inquired Reuben, to whom Faith had not lost time in explaining many things. "And I may call thee Aunt since 't is so soon to be my right?"

Mistress Winterbourne grimaced faintly with an attempt at civility, since the young man was His Excellency's kin, but her expression relapsed at once into blankness.

"If thou wilt not sit down, Aunt, perhaps thou wouldst like a bit of my mistletoe," Faith broke in, not without bashful mischief in her voice. "Reuben has been a good twenty miles to fetch it for me; he marked the spot where it grows last week when he was hunting."

Mistress Winterbourne's mind, working quickly backward, recalled the threats and prophesies which she had uttered not later than yesterday. She saw her defeat, but she could not accept it without one last effort at reassertion.

"If His Excellency sees fit to overlook thy silly doings 't is for thee to be thankful,

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not puffed up," she remarked sharply. "I will go now, Reuben, and make thy safety known."

The young couple, standing together, watched her as she stepped wirily down the starlit road. The wind had subsided and the promise of a moon lighted the clouds at one point with silvery bars. Faith and Reuben remained with upturned faces for a moment; then they went in and closed the door.

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Mrs. Barnaby

AS the two young men came down the walk by the old Barnaby place a small brougham, leaving the street, intercepted their path for an instant and then rolled briskly up the gravel drive. A woman dressed in deep mourning, leaned back against the cushions, her pale face with its waving reddish hair fixed straight in front of her. Even in the brief moment of passing it was possible to see that she was both distinguished and unusual in her appearance.

As the carriage disappeared the doctor turned to his friend with a little show of excitement in his manner.

"Mrs. Barnaby—John Barnaby's widow," he exclaimed. "You knew that she was coming here to live?"

"Is she? I had not heard." Phillips strode on at a pace which it cost the shorter man an effort to match.

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"Yes, the servants and three horses came down last week," the doctor continued when they were again walking abreast. "It is a curious thing, isn't it, that after all his mismanagement Barnaby should have left a fortune? I wonder what turn luck took him."

"Isn't it possible that Mrs. Barnaby may have been independent in her own right?" Phillips suggested.

"Oh, I am sure not." It was a confusing peculiarity of the doctor's that he would argue as earnestly for a hypothesis as a fact. "You may remember that he married her abroad not long before he died and there was never any formal announcement made of it. His cousins received the papers with his marriage and the notice of his death together. She sent them I suppose."

"Poor old John," mused Phillips, "he never did things in the regular way. She is not foreign, do you know?"

"Certainly not foreign; American to the last degree," asserted the doctor promptly, although his knowledge of the antecedents of the lady in question existed only as his sense of fitness prompted it in his own mind. As it happened in this case his supposition was

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correct. And this is the way in which reputations for authority are made.

Amelia Barnaby was American to the last degree. As she stepped from the brougham and stood for a moment with her long veil held down against her side, the self-reliance of her poise, the calm scrutiny with which her eyes wandered over the old house betrayed the habit of independence. A servant opened the door as she came up the steps, and a shrill, middle-aged voice hailed her entrance, through the banisters above, with excited volubility.

"Wait a minute Amelia, I am just getting into my tea gown—here Mena another pin—oh, dear, nobody expected you so early. Do you hear, Mena, the cherry bow."

Mrs. Barnaby was apparently familiar with the voice.

"Don't hurry, Netta," she returned indulgently. Her tone even when raised, preserved its clear and equable quality.

She gave her bag and book to a maid and remained standing in the center of the large hall, looking curiously about her. The ejaculations continued upstairs for a few moments longer, then there was a rustle of

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silks and a woman, with arms extended, came running down. Her voice at once identified her. She had a heavy, square-boned face which, with its darkened upper lip, would have found the fineries grotesquely unbecoming but for a certain superficial piquancy of expression. In the same way her liveliness of manner covered a natural awkwardness.

"Such a place as you have brought us to, Amelia," she exclaimed, when she had kissed the younger woman effusively on both cheeks. "Such a little wretch as you were to send me here for a week alone. I am—why—fairly petrified ; there is no life left in me."

Mrs. Barnaby smiled faintly as, in order to emphasize the truth of this remark, her companion made her arms in their voluminous sleeves flutter like a bird's wings.

"Tell them to bring tea, Netta, that is a good soul," she said, moving instinctively toward the most home-like of the rooms.

It was a long low library, wainscoated half way up with wide panels on which the paint had begun to grow thin and yellow with age. Above, books alternated with family portraits. A wood fire smouldered on the hearth. Amelia going up to the fireplace,

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tapped the log with the tip of her boot, and it broke into a blaze.

"Now tell me everything, Netta," she said, seating herself in a big chair.

Miss Netta Leffingwell opened her small brown eyes under their straight brows with an expression of exaggerated reproach.

"I would gladly tell you anything, Amelia," she replied, "but that is the worst of this place; there is nothing to tell. The servants have cleaned the house, and it needed it very badly; and I have seen that they didn't throw the ancestral furniture at each other. Oh, my dear, it is the ancestral part of it that I can't stand—the ancestral inconveniences. Mena has to bring me my hot water every morning in a pitcher, and then if I don't get up the instant I am called, it is cold. Ugh! there is no end to it."

"And the people?" Mrs. Barnaby interposed gently.

"There are no people," Miss Netta replied with the promptness of a person whose mind is made up before-hand. "Nothing but frumps. My dear, I give you my word of honor there isn't a bonnet, not one worthy of the name, in the whole town. I have driven

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every afternoon—I have kept my eyes open—”

Mrs. Barnaby, apparently intent on her own meditations interrupted her with a slight, forbidding gesture.

“To think,” she said thoughtfully “that seven successive unbroken generations of Barnabys have lived in this house.”

Miss Netta, about to resume her tirade on a fresh line stopped and stared at this, and then broke into a loud laugh.

“Well, that is a good joke;” she cried, “your remembering such a thing.”

Her laugh died down suddenly, however, as Mrs. Barnaby raised her eyes and looked at her; the look was deliberate and commanding.

“Once for all, Netta,” she said quietly “you must understand that you are neither to think nor to say anything that has any reference to—to what you mean. If you do, you will make me self-conscious; you will deprive me of all the pleasure I hope to take in this life here. You will have to go away,” she added, without the faintest threat of manner.

Miss Netta made no immediate reply but her face sobered.

“I do not pretend that I expect you to

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sympathize with me," Amelia went on after a short pause. "Different natures respond to different influences. You respond, Netta, to the Bois and the play and the crowds. I? I respond to the peace of this." She waved her hand comprehensively about the room as she spoke.

"If you will excuse me," Miss Netta said hurriedly, "there is something I must remind John of before dinner."

After she had gone Amelia rose and began to move about the room, touching the different pieces of furniture almost caressingly with her slender fingers. She lingered longest before the portraits; from some of the older ones the gilt frames had almost entirely crumbled away. They were taken at different periods and showed almost perfectly the style of dress in progressive stages. The women were all of them more or less haughty and beautiful. Instinctively Amelia turned and regarded her own reflection in the wide mirror above the mantle.

"I wonder," she said aloud, "if I shall ever have the courage to hang one of myself here."

It was through their nephew, Peabody

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Phillips, that the Ladies Peabody—as they were commonly called—had their attention first directed toward Mrs. Barnaby. These three noble old ladies, serene in their maidenhood, and the last bearers of an illustrious name, were not, as their nephew knew, beyond a human interest in the affairs of the town. When he introduced Mrs. Barnaby's name into the conversation he had done so casually; he was surprised therefore to find how reminiscent a note had been struck. Miss Esther, having carefully laid down the brown wrister which she was knitting for unknown heathen, removed her glasses; this was always the signal of confidential memories. Her faded blue eyes took on a far-away look.

“It is a long time since we have had even a Barnaby by marriage in town,” she said. “It must be ten years since little John went away. But in my time, Peabody, the Barnaby place used to be the center of everything. You remember girls?” She appealed to her two sisters whose soft puffs of hair on either side of their high calm foreheads, matched her own for silvery whiteness.

“It was always gayest when Jonathan was at home,” ventured Miss Sarah.

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"Jonathan and William and Peter, three brothers," Miss Esther continued. "We have no families of that sort nowadays, Peabody. One a general, one a governor and one only a gentleman—but such a gentleman. You recall, girls, how people used to turn to see William leave a room?"

As a result of the news brought by Peabody Phillips, Miss Esther informed her sisters a few days later that while she must be held exempt from social duties on account of her rheumatism, she had considered the propriety of their calling on young Mrs. Barnaby and had decided in favor of their going. Accordingly a horse was summoned from the neighboring livery stable and hitched to the family chariot; and in due course Miss Sarah and Miss Mary, dressed in shining poplin, came down and took their places behind its faded rose silk curtains. Secure in the eminent respectability of their own carriage, they were happily unmindful that the poor animal which drew it, accustomed as he was to modern vehicles of moderate weight, taxed all the stable-boy's power of persuasion to coax him up each hill.

And so it happened that Amelia Barnaby

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found herself seated one afternoon between these two ladies who regarded her with the dignity and kindliness for which their race had long been renowned. Had Netta been present during this interview, she might have detected a change in Amelia before it was ended—a hint that her self-possession had been shaken ; but the Ladies Peabody found her all that was charming and desirable in a young woman of her position. They encouraged her to give her impressions of Heretford, and, while pointing out its natural advantages, assured her that it was not what it used to be when her husband's great uncles were alive. She seemed so receptive, so unaffectedly glad to hear their opinions, that the stable-boy, whose fingers were chilling outside, had reason to reflect that the Ladies had never lingered so long before. It was just before they rose to go that Miss Sarah inadvertently made the first allusion to "little John."

"No doubt these are very old stories to you my dear," she said, shaking her white head, "your husband used to love to hear us tell them and he knew them all."

Miss Mary, whose gaze chanced to be on

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Amelia's face at that moment fancied that it grew a shade paler. She could not be sure, however, the young woman recovered herself so quickly.

"There is much which Mr. Barnaby did not tell me that I am very happy to hear," she said, frankly. "And you will excuse me, but I do not find it easy to speak of him."

The sisters were at once filled with remorse at their lack of tact. They hastened to divert attention from themselves by delivering Miss Esther's invitation for tea the following Thursday with many cordial embellishments of their own, and finally they departed, Amelia having accepted gracefully but without effusion.

When Phillips received his aunt's invitation for tea, although he felt some weariness at the prospect, the carefully formed words in dull brown ink were for him a command. He had been bred to a respect for his elders in general and for the Ladies Peabody in particular. As he entered their large, square sitting-room, however, on the evening appointed, he could not refrain from a quiet smile at the thought of Mrs. Barnaby's

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probable point of view ; the youthful element was so strikingly in the minority.

Amelia was the last to arrive. As she crossed the threshold the little company stood up silently expectant, and Miss Esther taking her by the hand, proceeded to go through the introductions. There were the Rev. Joshua Hildreth, his wife, and their daughter Jane ; Mr. Paul Baddington, whose late wife had been a great-niece of the Ladies ; and last of all, Peabody Phillips.

It is true that Amelia Barnaby had never in all her life seen a gathering which remotely represented the standards, the traditions or even the prejudices of the one before her now ; but from her manner nobody could have divined that this was the case. She bowed in turn to each person and then sank modestly into one of the Chippendale chairs which were placed at regular intervals against the walls and about the square center-table. She was, however, keenly conscious that observation centered on her. Phillips, well back in the shadow of a corner, was trying to determine whether she would generally be considered a beauty. From the occasional glimpses he had caught of her in the carriage

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he had not expected to find her so tall. The exquisite grace of her movements and the perfect repose of her manner he, of course, saw for the first time. So absorbed was he in this contemplation that Miss Esther was obliged to remind him twice that Mrs. Hildreth stood waiting to accept his arm.

When Amelia was alone at home in her own room that night she had over with herself several small impressions of Phillips which she considered open to criticism. While she admired his simple, natural deference toward the old ladies, she thought his manners as a whole lacking in polish. She was unaccustomed to the blunt observance of exact truth in his speech; the absence of any conventional affectations of either tact or interest toward herself. In thinking of her feeling about him she concluded that it was chiefly one of irritation. Phillips on the other hand did not attempt any self-deceit as to her attraction for him. In his honest, whole-hearted way he admitted from the beginning that it was happiness to be with her and having gotten so far his energies were mostly bent in bringing this result about.

In this, circumstances favored him.

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The Ladies Peabody having set the seal of their approval on Mrs. Barnaby it was inevitable that other calls and subsequently other invitations should follow theirs. Toward all these Amelia showed herself pleasantly social. As the second year of her widowhood had not yet expired she declined everything save the tea-drinkings of the older generation and an occasional small dinner with some young couple, informal occasions at which Phillips would almost inevitably count on being invited. In these intimate hours at the table or before some hospitable fire it was not astonishing how rapidly their acquaintance ripened. After a while people began to take notice of it and raise their eyebrows significantly, but the two most concerned remained unconscious of their own drift until the doctor—who shall say how dangerous a social stirring-stick—chanced one day to touch Phillips to the quick.

The two men were walking up to their homes together as often happened, when the doctor somewhat unexpectedly brought Amelia's name into their talk.

"Charming woman, Mrs. Barnaby; brilliant woman," he went on in his babbling

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ejaculatory way. "How she plays, what spirit, what fire." Then, as Phillips made no reply he turned and tapped him on the arm with a suddenly-confidential air. "Something a little odd about her, eh? Perhaps you do not happen to know that lady who lives with her and whose acquaintance everybody has somehow managed to ignore. I suppose it isn't too much to hint that probably Mrs. Barnaby has helped them in this. Well, I was called to see her professionally the other day." He paused and glanced at the other man as if to enjoy the full effect of his words. "My dear fellow, to the best of my professional judgment Miss Netta's disease is discontent. You mark me, there is something out of the ordinary about that woman; perhaps it wouldn't be putting it too strong to say a sort of a taint."

During this speech Phillips had compressed his lips tightly and he did not now turn his head in replying.

"I have understood that this person was Mrs. Barnaby's house-keeper," he said coolly.

The doctor gave a short, incredulous laugh.

"A house-keeper, indeed, with her own

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poodles and a maid at her beck and call day and night!"

The doctor's vague insinuations had, at least, the effect of rousing Phillips from his unanalyzed contentment. He was an impulsive man and rushed at once to the conclusion that Amelia had probably been imposed upon as to the character of the woman she was befriending. It was characteristic, therefore, that in order to satisfy himself on this point he should have begun by going direct to her.

He found her sitting before the fire, a half-finished book lying open in her lap. She smiled and held out her hand to him without rising. He had never seen her in anything but black; to-night she wore a loose gown of some soft white stuff; it made her face look younger and gave a roundness to her flesh. Phillips was very sensible of this change in her; he took the chair opposite and leaning back, soon lapsed into an almost silent regard of her loveliness. For a while Amelia talked on gayly, inquiring for the Ladies Peabody and relating the trifling adventures of the day, but at last his silence began to affect her, she faltered and glanced up, coloring a little as she met his gaze.

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"I suppose," he began almost bluntly, catching her look and replying to it as if it had been words, "that you think I have no right, that it is too soon——"

She raised her hands with a swift, imperative gesture. "Do not," she said so sharply, so desperately, that for the moment he was struck dumb.

"If it is unpleasant to you, certainly not," he managed to say, presently.

She could see that he was deeply hurt; he reached about for his hat, as if preparing to go. In that instant every nerve in her body seemed to stiffen into resolution. She made a slight restraining gesture.

"If you will be good enough to wait, there is something I should like to tell you," she said; her tone was perfectly even and quiet, but she had grown pale at the lips. "Not that it makes any difference in what you were saying just now; but I am going away from here very soon. I wanted to ask you to help me and I wanted you to—know."

"I am quite at your service," Phillips replied, with professional stiffness.

"I think, perhaps, I can tell you it best by going back to my first meeting with John

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Barnaby," she continued slowly, ignoring his manner and seeming to feel about for the best words to use. "That was at Cannes five summers ago; he was there with some people on a yacht, but I saw a good deal of him and in some way he got into the habit of telling me about his home and his boyhood and his relatives. He cared very much for his family and the stories about them. I suppose the account fascinated me. I was not used to such things. At all events he went away, but I never forgot anything that he had told me about the life here. Then we went on through Europe to the old places, my father and Netta and I." She hesitated here and appeared to go on with an effort. "I think I had better tell you now," she said, "that my father was a professional gambler, and Netta—Netta lived with us. In her way she was very kind and faithful to my father, and in his last illness she made real sacrifices. I think he truly cared for her more than for anyone else in the world. It was about a year after we were at Cannes that my father died; at that time he happened to have a good deal of money and the law of course gave it all to me. After that

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I took Netta and went from city to city. I suppose it was natural that we should have drifted back to the places where we had been before. Anyway, wherever we went, everybody seemed to know us and all about us. I was never anything but 'Jo Leffingwell's daughter.' I have been conscious that even the hotel clerks pointed me out in that way to strangers. I know that I dwelt too much on it; I grew morbid about it; sometimes as I look back now, I think I was half-insane over the injustice of it. It was not quite as if I had grown up in such a life. My mother was a western clergyman's daughter and we lived with him until she died, then my father came back from Europe and took me away. Perhaps it seems to you that I might have left Netta and gone back to my grandfather—but I could n't. For one thing, Netta needed me; she is as simple and irresponsible as a child; then, I will be honest, my mother's people are homely ordinary folk. I shrank from their way too. What I wanted was to be free, perfectly free, with a respectable name that would be a protection."

She paused and looked at him as if expecting him to say something. His face was

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full of a horror that startled her. She could not realize how entirely outside of his experience were the circumstances of which she spoke with the readiness of familiarity.

"In the spring," she resumed, presently, "we went back to Paris. One night we were coming out of a theatre and in the lobby we met a man whose face seemed very familiar; he recognized us too and bowed and smiled and then I remembered John Barnaby. We were not thinking of the conventionalities in those days and I asked him to come and see me—but he never came. Three weeks later I met him again, he was leaning against one of the posts in the street and coughing violently. By the daylight I could see that he was very thin and pale and that his clothes were shabby. I called to my coachman to stop. Mr. Barnaby came forward when he saw me. I asked him laughingly what he meant by staying in such a climate with such a cough. He looked up quite cheerfully I remember and replied, 'my dear Miss Leffingwell, it is hardly worth while to be to the trouble of moving for only six weeks; as I understand the doctor, the fatal symptoms have set in.' Then I asked him for his

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address and he gave it to me without any attempt at concealment; it was in one of the cheapest quarters."

At this point Amelia rose and walked to the end of the room and back again. Her eyes shone in sockets hollow from excitement; she came and stood before Phillips and mechanically he rose too.

"I don't know whether you will be able to believe it or not," she said, her voice had grown cold and hard, "but I went to Mr. Barnaby and told him what I have told you and asked him to marry me. I found him in need of every comfort. I proposed that as soon as the marriage was over he should go to the south of France with a good nurse. I even saw his doctor and learned that this might prolong his life for a few weeks. I was to come away here to America with an honorable name—that was my plan. I was bitterly disappointed when he at first refused. But afterwards he thought the matter over and came to me; he was so feeble he could scarcely walk. I think he was sorry for me, and too, he loved this old house and had kept it when everything else was gone, but it was mortgaged. He brought the papers to me and

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asked me to save it in his name, but I was sure he never intended me to come here." She stopped again and drew in a quick breath between her teeth. "We were married three days later," she said, "and that is all there is about it. He never left his rooms in the hotel after that and I never saw him again—but Netta used to go in sometimes and talk to him."

When she had finished speaking she turned away and sank into a chair, covering her face with her hands.

"Poor little woman," Phillips murmured, "poor little woman," but he made no movement to go to her. All the instincts of his blood and the training of his life rebelled against that.

She took down her hands and saw the struggle he was going through, and felt herself condemned.

"I want you to know that I did not understand then, what great things family honor and pride are," she said humbly. "I simply wanted to have a respectable name that belonged to me; that was all. I didn't mean anything wrong when I came here either. But now that I do know how you value these

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things, you must not think that I am going to steal my position here any longer. I want to go away quietly without any questions, and I want you to arrange that this house shall go to some of the Barnaby's when I am dead. Then Netta must be provided for. I should like to have the greater part of the income settled on her in trust. I will send you the papers to-morrow."

"Amelia!" Phillips voice rang out loud and possessing. He strode over to her and grasping both her hands drew her to her feet.

"No, no," she cried, bravely, "I could never accept the sacrifice."

It was six months before Phillips dared to follow Amelia to the city where she had gone in determined haste. During that time there had been an opportunity for each to learn the value of the other's love—and Amelia by hard discipline to gain a new self-respect. She resisted Phillips' pleading honestly and she believed with her whole strength, but in the end, as he had foreseen, she yielded.

The Ladies Peabody were in a flutter

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of pleasurable excitement at the prospect of having their dear Mrs. Barnaby back again as a niece. They sent her a box of their best ancestral silver and yards of lovely yellow lace, together with three prim little notes brimming with love and delight, through the peepholes of involved and stilted sentences. Only the doctor shrugged his shoulders and remarked that it was awfully bad, Mrs. Barnaby's losing her money of a sudden like that, but at least Phillips could be thankful that Miss Netta had gone back to her dear Paris.

THE INVASION OF MICHAEL

The Invasion of Michael

THE popular Willis-Cheney house parties were established with the introduction of the eldest Miss Willis-Cheney to society. They had a great success from the first. This arose in a measure no doubt from the fact that the opportunity was ripe for such a diversion. Christmas in town having become, for that condition of people whose taste is refined beyond roast turkey and cranberry sauce, far from an enlivening day. As anyone who stops to think of it will see, there is really nothing left for them to do save look out through the wreaths in the windows and dismally disapprove those unmistakable family groups which constantly hurry by to their reunions and midday meals. From such an experience, Mrs. Willis-Cheney's hospitable offer of isolation thirty miles deep in the country, with gay companionship, came as a deliverance. There too, effort was made that all Christmas

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memories and obligations should cease from troubling. For one thing, it was an unwritten law that there should be no interchange of gifts and thus those disappointments which follow the opening of meager parcels from one's most promising friends were avoided. But this single concession Mrs. Willis-Cheney did make to the season; there was always a ball on Christmas eve with a loving cup and holly and other traditional greens imported for this purpose from England. On this occasion, also, a special train was run down from town for the extra guests, and the village beauty, in response to a cordial invitation, stood about in corners, an object of covert ridicule in a white albatross gown and amber beads. Among her other careful provisions Mrs. Willis-Cheney included plenty of men.

Under this combination of circumstances debutantes were not slow to discover the worth of an invitation. Their mammas baited Mrs. Willis-Cheney with the same suave persistency that they followed a masculine trail. For five years these "weeks" had gone on to a triumphant and perfect close. During this time two of the three Misses

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Willis-Cheney were satisfactorily established for life with country places of their own. People who had an indelicate habit of speaking out their thoughts attributed the climax of one suit and the beginning of the other, to the fostering monotony of snow-covered hills and the dangerous propinquity of severe unbroken days. Whether or not Mrs. Willis-Cheney heard these criticisms, certain it is that they troubled her very little and effected her actions not at all. Sarah's future was as yet unprovided for. Accordingly, on the sixth year, her notes went out as usual and very shortly it began to be rumored at teas who was going and who was not.

The gathering in this instance proved to be smaller than formerly and chosen from a somewhat gayer clique. There was a reason for this, of course, and before twenty-four hours had passed it might have been apparent to any body who took pains to observe, that the whole affair had been deliberately organized with a view to making it as congenial as possible to Mr. Pendexter Vanderpool. In other words Mr. Pendexter Vanderpool was intended for Sarah—and not the least

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gratifying part of the outlook seemed to be that he intended himself.

It was known that since the previous fall he had followed her about and danced with her at irregular intervals, and, as no other young woman in society could boast of even such uncertain attentions, they were justly considered significant. The truth is that society had not been much enriched by Mr. Pendexter Vanderpool's presence for several seasons. He said of himself that he had been traveling, yachting in the Mediterranean, enlarging his horizon, but his near friends advised him that it was time to settle down. There was no question that he would be able to suit himself in choosing a partner to this gathering. Nobody, himself not excepted, had ever been able to forget that he was a distinctly eligible young man, although there could not have been the same harmonious agreement regarding his respectability. About this latter fact he was alarmingly frank. He advanced in extenuation, a creed which to him and to most of his acquaintances appeared to justify many things. It was, as he had given Mrs. Willis-Cheney very plainly to understand, that once a man went

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in for the domestic and all that sort of thing, he held him in honor bound not to backslide. She had considered this reassurance enough.

But Miss Sarah Willis-Cheney was not always of her mother's opinion. In this she differed disagreeably from her elder sisters who had been, as everyone was ready to testify, most lovable and tractable girls. Sarah, on the other hand, although the handsomest of the three, had developed a character wholly unfamiliar to her mother. This perplexed parent sometimes meditated with bitterness that the fault had all lain in humoring her late husband and giving the child such an uncompromising name. Evangeline and Grace had both grown up to their names most fittingly and now it seemed that Sarah, with her decided opinions and defiant out-spokenness, was not going to be an exception to the rule.

But Mrs. Willis-Cheney did not despair, because the girl was young and she knew that no one would look for what was in her mind so long as her exuberant beauty and the piquancy of her manner lasted. Her only fear was—the danger there is always with girls—that they might not last. An

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imaginary disappointment in love, an illness, a bad digestion—and they are gone. Consequently it could not have helped being a great relief if these evanescent charms had been well settled. This is the way matters stood on the morning of the Christmas ball.

If Mrs. Willis-Cheney took pride in one degree of tact more than another, it was that she never overreached herself. Where many mothers would have pushed and crowded, she patiently waited. During the preceding days she had not connived to bring Mr. Pendexter Vanderpool and Sarah conspicuously together. On the contrary, whenever any formal pairing off fell to the hostess, she had with insistent amiability, allotted Mr. Pendexter Vanderpool to the statuesquely beautiful and, so every man declared, vacuous Miss Van Lyle. As for Sarah, she was similarly put out of harm's way, each night at dinner, by the side of Mr. Tudor Smith. It was only on discovering this usefulness that Mr. Smith's presence could be accounted for. He was the sort of young man generally mentioned in social vernacular as "filling." And ordinarily Mrs.

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Willis-Cheney had no place for him in her calculations.

Mr. Tudor Smith wrote for his living; not novels or poems, because those might have given him a vogue, but tiresome editorials and essays, and books upon sociological questions, with long paragraphs and not an incident or a striking situation from cover to cover. Fortunately, however, Mr. Smith had the common sense to keep his work very much in the background. Barring this drawback, together with those of having no money prospect and no family connections, there was really nothing to be said against him. Indeed, so far as conversation went, his remarks were always the most timely, his stories the cleverest. His appearance was immaculate—without knowledge of his antecedents it might almost have been mistaken for aristocratic; and his courtesy toward every woman, whatever her attractions, had won him a loyal support among plain, neglected maidens.

It is not to be supposed, either, that he was so self-satisfied as to mistake Mrs. Willis-Cheney's distinguishing favor as genuine. No, Tudor Smith lived by his wit and,

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having been let to play sheep dog to the most charming girl of his acquaintance, he had told himself on the first evening of his arrival that however much worshipping he might have permitted himself from afar, there must be no nonsense now. So, thoroughly on his guard, he had skated and walked and discussed all sorts of topics with Miss Sarah in a spirit of perfect friendliness, very warm friendliness, as each assured the other, on both sides.

Breakfast was over and most of the guests, assembled in the large hall, were discussing the decorations. It was a part of the prescribed amusement that they should do the decorating themselves. There were, to be sure, a couple of men from town to drive the hard nails and do the finishing when enthusiasm flagged.

Everything had started off admirably and Mrs. Willis-Cheney, lying back in a chair, was congratulating herself on how little it takes to divert grown people when a distant tableau caught her eye.

It was nothing more than Sarah, mounted to dizzy heights on a stepladder, while Tudor Smith below held it by a steadying hand.

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There was absolutely no cause to excite remark, but Mrs. Willis-Cheney had an intuition that she liked neither it nor Tudor Smith. In an instant her well-earned repose had been swept away. Although she was not given to acting on impulses, she rose now and crossed the room. Poor Mrs. Willis-Cheney, had she considered for a dozen years she could not have foreseen to any avail; but she might have been spared the reflection that her own impetuous act had precipitated her own humiliation.

As it was, she simply said: "Mr. Smith, may I ask a little favor of you? I have ordered Hector brought around; you like him to ride I believe; would you be good enough to take a telegram over to the north station? You see I call on you all to-day in the confusion."

There was no alternative; besides Tudor Smith always enjoyed a bracing gallop. He hurried off to get into his riding clothes, while Sarah, now seated on the top of the ladder, regarded her mother with searching and not altogether tender eyes.

But as the day wore on, Tudor Smith was forgotten in the rush of preparation. He should have returned in an hour—two

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passed, then three. At luncheon somebody missed him and Pendexter Vanderpool hazarded the surmise that "he'd gone a crupper, not being used to so fit a beast." When the ladies withdrew to dress for the evening he had not yet put in an appearance but the groom, who was then sent to look for him, returned shortly with the news that he had met Mr. Smith just coming in at the Park gate.

The musicians were tuning their instruments on the landing; the butler had considerably moved a table away from under the mistletoe and Mrs. Willis-Cheney was falling into place to receive, when Tudor Smith entered the hall.

He looked smiling, fresh shaven and in the best of spirits. His apology was made glibly if in somewhat vague terms. He had suddenly found it imperative to go into Williamsport, ten miles away, and he trusted Mrs. Willis-Cheney would pardon this liberty with her horse flesh. Mrs. Willis-Cheney recalled what he was talking about long enough to wave him benignly away before she advanced to greet the first arrivals.

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But Sarah had altogether different ideas of an explanation and when he went to claim his dance with her, she asked him point blank where he had been. He admitted Williamsport, but more than that he would not make known. Why he had gone there in the first place and why he had remained an entire day in the second, were questions which he evaded with irritating persistence. Now mystery on the part of so warm a friend as Tudor Smith, especially when accompanied by a humorous light in his eyes, quickened Sarah into something very like indignation.

Without giving vent to this in words, however, she walked away on the arm of Pendexter Vanderpool and straightway disposed to other men of the next two dances for which she had engaged herself to Tudor Smith.

Thus it happened that they did not come together again until the final waltz before supper. Tudor Smith was by this time savage, and determined to claim his rights at the risk of losing his reputation for inoffensiveness forever. But another man, serene in Sarah's promise, had already taken up his position on her other side and it was as

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she stood demurely between their questioning glances that the invasion took place.

It occurred that they had come to a standstill directly opposite the front door. This was of heavy oak, fashioned in two sections, with double sets of hinges, and earlier in the evening—it was afterward explained—the butler had set the upper half ajar for purposes of ventilation.

As Sarah gazed apparently into space, being in reality only conscious of the men beside her, this upper half swung slowly open and there rose over the top of the lower half the dishevelled and eager head of what promised to be a small boy. Judged by this head he was the sort of small boy that the company there assembled were best acquainted with in illustrations, and water color sketches at the exhibitions. Discovered in the flesh it lost something of its picturesqueness. Long straggling locks of coarse black hair hung down over a damp forehead, large, shining eyes peered curiously above cheeks reddened and roughened by the wind. The mouth was undeniably very large and dirty.

The head made one exhaustive survey of the groups, thinned in the interval of dancing.

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Then a leg was introduced and in an instant the whole of a small and wiry body had dropped into the ball-room. Sarah was unable to do more than gasp and make a gesture, before, with the assurance of Pendexter Vanderpool himself, the boy had pattered across the room and accosted Tudor Smith.

Tudor Smith, torn from an inward contemplation of his wrongs, caught one glimpse of the tattered, disreputable object, started and flushed a guilty, brilliant red.

"What on earth are you doing here Michael?" he demanded, committing himself to the acquaintance.

"Come to see you. Ma sent me," returned the boy candid and unembarrassed. "They wouldn't lemme in down stairs."

"And quite right, this is no place for you—get out."

As the boy did not stir, he made a movement as if to carry out his instructions, but Sarah held up a restraining hand.

"On the contrary, let me welcome your friend, Mr. Smith." Her voice had a half-mocking, half-sarcastic ring. "If he has a message for you pray don't deprive

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yourself of the pleasure of hearing it."

As if to quite complete Tudor Smith's discomfiture, the returning dancers had begun to gather in an inquisitive half circle. Self preservation kept them at a certain distance, however, for Michael's nether garments were in such a state of drip that a puddle had already begun to form on the waxed floor.

On Sarah's interference Tudor Smith had drawn back with the pantomime of a groan. Michael was enchanted by her kind interest.

"Why, you see it's this way, Miss," he hastened to explain, "Ma sent me. Says she, find him whether he's there or not an' tell him oime a proud an' thankful woman this night to be beholden to the likes of him. They didn't have no use for me down stairs. So thinks I if they wont lemme in why I'll run in. You see Ma wanted to thank him. 'Thout him we wouldn't ev had no Christmas dinner! Says Ma, tell him it would er been the furst time in her twenty years of her married life she had n't had no turkey for her and the children."

"Will you shut up," interrupted Tudor

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Smith, low but vehement, "Do you hear me? Get out."

But Sarah and the boy were both beyond any restraint of his.

"Did Mr. Smith give you a Christmas dinner?" she asked. "If he did I am sure it is very nice of you to want to thank him."

"Oh! aint he told you?" Michael blossomed into a sudden glow of importance. "He done more 'n that. The old man said to-night he'd saved the family repertation. You see de veg'tables was due to Williamsport at two sharp or dere wasn't no trade. Well, Pa and me was ridin' long good an' early and the first thing we knowed that fool coal cart had run away an' hit our old mare and throwed Pa out an' broke us up no end. 'Bout that time this gent' comes along. Says he 'put that horse outer pain, she wont never stand on her legs again.'"

Sarah clasped her hands in excitement and the circle drew closer.

"There we was," Michael proceeded, "two miles from home and eight from Williamsport, an' Pa with his wrist all outer shape. 'Twas a fix, and when we told this gent' what a fix, he seen it. Down he gits

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'thout sayin' nothin' and unbuckles the traces and backs the wagon away from old Dolly and takes the saddle off en his hoss and hitches her into our wagon. An' he gits up on the seat an' drives the veg'tables and Pa and me to Williamsport." He drew a deep breath as if the remembrance of it was too great to be held longer in his small body. "By Gosh!" he exclaimed, "but that was a slick thing for a stuck up un like him to do."

There was a moment of awkward silence. Nobody felt quite decided whether to applaud or to sneer. Then Sarah turned toward Tudor Smith with a look that was meant for him alone.

"Come into the dining room," she said, "and bring the boy."

The curious procession passed out leaving a muddy trail behind. Not a dozen of the witnesses had caught the meaning of the scene and those few formed their own opinion about the absurdity of such a performance. It might have had an unpleasant side for them, too, as one girl insinuated to another when the chances of the dance brought them together.

"My dear," she said, "do you really sup-

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pose he really rode on the vegetables? And if we had met him, I have been wondering, should we have bowed?"

The other girl stared in amazement. "Why how could he have expected it!" she replied.

In the dining room Sarah ordered the butler to give to Michael as much of the best of everything in the house as he could carry including, at his own modest suggestion, a dish of ice cream. "Tell your mother I shall come and see her some day and I wish her a Merry Christmas" she said.

When he had departed via the butler's pantry she turned again to Tudor Smith and held out both hands with that frankness which her mother so much dreaded.

"Oh you dear, dear man," she exclaimed. "Here I have been rude and suspicious and all the time you were doing this noble thing."

"Not noble," deprecated Tudor Smith, "only ridiculous, you know, very ridiculous. There were a great many squashes on the load."

But Sarah would have none of his flippancy.

"I said noble," she repeated with a touch

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of dignity. And then as she continued to hold out her hands he could scarcely do less than take them and draw her into the embrasure of the window.

When the butler came in, with his noiseless step, a few minutes later, he was almost surprised into an exclamation. But as soon as he had made sure by a second look to whom the figures belonged he could not resist creeping down stairs for just long enough to relieve his mind by telling the cook.

The next morning, however, Sarah told everybody herself, having managed it very cleverly, since in the first horror of the announcement her mother had forgotten to demand secrecy. The shock to that good gentle woman was followed by a couple of hours of useless protestations and weeping; then the habit of her life became too strong for even her prejudices—she remembered appearances. Presently, therefore, when rosewater had sufficiently comforted her swollen eyelids, she put on her smartest gown and appeared among her guests, demanding their felicitations. It was indeed a brave bearing up, but nobody was in the least

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deceived; and in any case the sullen countenance of Mr. Pendexter Vanderpool would have betrayed part of the story.

When several of the party were in the train on their way up to town, one of the younger girls began talking it over with her companion.

"I am afraid we shall never be asked again," she said, with prophetic regret. "This has all turned out so distressingly."

"But if they love each other," ventured the man.

"And what, may I ask, do you think they are going to live on?"

The man sighed and leaned back in his cushioned chair.

"Oh, I give it up," he replied wearily. "It takes so much to keep a girl alive nowadays."

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A Triumph of Mind

BROMFIELD EMORY was generally spoken of by the members of his mother's family as an example of Eliot good breeding, and by the members of his father's family as an inveterate smoker. Late on the afternoon of one gray day he stood at the foot of the Common steps, opposite the Somerset Club, turning his tall, stooping figure toward various points of the compass, in his effort to protect his cigar from the wind. Already half a dozen matches had spluttered and gone out. A man's last chance of a light is a matter for anxiety, and Emory felt more than ordinary interest in his last match. Indeed, it so absorbed his attention that not until he had struck the light was he made aware of a second presence by a hand which, stretched suddenly from behind, shut off a violent gust. The flame shot up clear and effective. He drew a

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satisfying puff or two and turned, expecting to greet some old acquaintance. Instead, across the path, and directly in front of him stood a young woman, with friendly blue eyes and an expression which said as plainly as words that she was waiting to be recognized.

And to the best of Emory's recollection he had never seen her before. He stared back at her accordingly with a good deal of dismay, feeling that one of them must be making a mistake, and doubtless that one was himself,—that probably her name ought to be ready upon his lips. There was something so confident about the serene poise with which she waited for him to speak that his embarrassment grew with each second. He plunged into his memory for men friends who might have wives with pale yellow hair, very much blown, surmounted by a French hat in lavenders and pinks. He ran over in his mind the younger sisters in the houses where he was in the habit of going, one of whom might, by a miracle, have come home from school developed into this lovely woman.

The silence emphasized the awkwardness. If he did not know her it was plain that the fault was his, and that he ought to.

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For practical purposes it would be best to assume that he did recognize her; doubtless her identity would be fixed in conversation.

"Do you know," he found voice to say, "I was so much overwhelmed to find you abetting a vice, I hadn't graciousness left to thank you."

"Why, I thought you understood that I approved of smoking," said the girl.

"Do you, really? Most women are so unpleasant about it! They put it on the ground of anxiety for one's health, but I suspect it's for their own window curtains."

The girl smiled.

"Shall we go on?" she asked, leading off, with head turned back to him over her fur-trimmed collar.

They walked a few steps in silence; then she began again: "Aren't you feeling well to-day? You seem a little absent-minded. Don't you recall, Bromfield, that we have been all over this smoking question before?"

Emory breathed short at the sound of his given name. A new suggestion took form, and he wondered why it had not entered his head that she might be a relative—one of the

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little Beacon Hill Bromfields grown up. He had not visited these cousins since before his college days; this girl was one of them, of course. The only point that now remained was which one. As a child Octavia had been the lighter; he determined to take a chance.

"That was so long ago, Octavia."

"Long ago?" she repeated argumentatively; then with a suddenly suspicious tone she exclaimed, "Who is Octavia?"

"Why, I—that is,—"

"Who is Octavia?"

Emory lowered his eyes and colored a dull red in his annoyance. Whoever this girl might be, she surely had no right to ask him such purely personal questions. Yet he answered humbly enough:

"Octavia is—my cousin. I haven't seen her for years. You—somehow you reminded me of her."

"Oh," said the girl, "maybe I look queer to you to-day in this hat. It's a Virot hat. Do you like it? But never mind that. I had to know about Octavia, you see, because when I caught sight of you from Aunt Gardiner's window, I made up my mind to something very important, and I came out to meet you at

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once. Bromfield, we always understand each other. We have a great deal temperamentally in common,—don't you think so?"

They were crossing Charles street, and an electric car helped Emory to escape from any attempt at an answer. In the Public Garden the girl immediately took up her subject again.

"I think, in fairness to myself, I ought to say, to begin with, that I have had five offers of marriage; there was even a German baron who wanted ridiculous settlements—but that isn't really relevant. What I wanted to say is, that I am going to surprise you, and I could make myself more clear if you wouldn't interrupt me in that annoying way you have of taking the words out of one's mouth."

Bromfield had heard this criticism of himself before. He stiffened and bowed.

"Of course I am in a trying situation," she continued, "and I feel it—some. But I haven't been born and bred in Boston without finding out that everything depends upon the point of view from which you take yourself. Now if I were taking myself from my grandmother's point of view, I should sink right down here on the grass and die of proper

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shame. But I'm not. I'm taking myself from the point of view of the coming generations of Boston girls. Somebody must always be a pioneer. Now I recognize, as I said, that we belong to each other temperamentally. We have tasks and inclinations and ideals in common. Your only fault is that you lack force, the strength of your own convictions. We might have waited ten years for you to say this to me. Now if you care for me, we can't afford to wait ten years for happiness. Bromfield, can you care for me?"

Emory glanced sideways at the flushed, girlish face; and the sight of it checked any unpleasant suspicion he might have harbored. Whether the girl was sane or not he was unprepared to pronounce. Of her complete good faith he felt positive. But, however it had been brought about, his position was not easy. The necessity of making some reply forced him to speech.

"I am afraid I am not the man you think I am—"

"That is for me to judge, isn't it," she interrupted.

"What I mean to explain is that I am afraid you have made a mistake. I am—"

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He paused, unable to tell what he was relatively to her.

They had left the Public Garden, and were entering Newbury street, in front of the St. Botolph Club. The sight of two or three men grouped in one of the windows gave him a fresh sense of his plight. "If you cannot care, please be frank," the voice at his side was saying. "We shall be friends still; it wouldn't be liberal minded or—or courteous, to hold it against each other."

Emory wanted to make some answer, but found nothing to say. All at once he was alive to the fact that his companion had tripped on the curbing. Instinctively he put out his hand to save her; he even clutched at her; but his fingers went through the velvet cape like a mist. There was a blurred outline for the fraction of a second, and then he again stood alone.

He went into the club, more from force of habit than because he had any object just then in being there. The group at the window hailed him with the usual greetings, and he joined them, wondering whether anything singular had been noticed in his approach. He waited, expecting each moment

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some allusion either to his late companion or his gyrations on the sidewalk; but the conversation turned off into safe channels of every-day gossip.

"Have you heard that the Bradley-Whites are home a week?" inquired one man.

Emory replied absently that he had not, and then pulled himself together with a start as he realized that he had drunk tea with young Mrs. Bradley-White only the previous afternoon. Presently somebody brought up a house-party which Mrs. Bowdoin was giving at her Gloucester place the first of the coming month. Emory admitted without enthusiasm that he was to be among the guests.

"As such things go," commented an elderly man, "Mrs. Bowdoin will be worth while. She does these things well—and I hear there will be none of her own people. The Bowdoin connections are all stiffly disagreeable. The Bradley-Whites will be there, and that young artist who painted her in London, and Miss Hancock and her married sister. It isn't too late to add names yet, I fancy. By the way, I saw Miss Hancock in

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Geneva. She hasn't lost a bit of color by all her foreign travel. She's the typical Boston girl through and through—clear eyes, perfect self-possession, decided opinions—and a good nose."

Emory rose.

"Going, Emory?"

"I must. I have an engagement."

He walked the streets for two hours trying to work out what had happened to him. And the more he dwelt on his experience, the more unreal and elusive it grew.

Mrs. Bowdoin was a charming hostess. She offered her guests plenty of amusing opportunities, but made no demands before her dinner hour. On the subject of dinner punctuality, tardy people said she was a fanatic. Emory had not been her friend for so long without discovering this, and on the night of his arrival, he slipped into her large, square hall with a general feeling of not being firmly put together. It was evident that his tardiness only had delayed the serving of the dinner. Mrs. Bowdoin at once marshalled him informally, together with some eleven other men and women, into the dining-room.

The oyster and soup courses had been

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gone through, and he was just settling down to the fish, when the woman on his right leaned back, and he caught a glimpse of the girl sitting at the end of the table by the host. He looked away instantly, and then, regardless of manners, bent well over his plate in order to see her again. This time their eyes met squarely—and there was no doubt left in his mind. She was the girl with whom he had crossed the Common. He noticed, however, that the light made her more vivid; her figure was fuller, her hair more golden, her eyes more blue. He would have liked to believe himself the victim of an optical delusion, and, in fact, told himself that he would see an eminent optician without delay. But all the while he was convinced that no optical delusion ever talked with such familiar evenness of tone. He ended by going to his hostess, as soon as the men had joined the ladies, and asking to be presented. Mrs. Bowdoin went through the brief formality, "Miss Hancock,—Mr. Emory," and left them.

From the first Emory had felt intuitively that their meeting was to be that of strangers. Whatever his curiosity might be about the

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way in which she had left him, and which, until he saw her again in the flesh, had almost led him to believe in the supernatural, he recognized that, by all the instincts of courtesy, he was bound to ignore what he now concluded had been a sentimental freak.

Miss Hancock was apparently ready to meet him more than half way in this. She guided their talk safely into topics of foreign travel and art; in fact she chatted so naturally that Emory found himself almost wholly forgetting the past in the present.

The next morning, when they were told off to the back seat of the T-cart, it was the same. And so, gradually, he came to dwell less and less on the Common episode, until one afternoon when he ran across Miss Hancock in the gun room reading, he remembered all of a sudden that in effect he had once refused to marry her. As he now turned it over in his mind, such imbecility appeared impossible, incredible,—brutal. Whatever the result, he decided to apologize on the spot.

“Miss Hancock,” he began, “I want to tell you how good you have been to me.”

“That isn’t always a safe thing to say to

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a woman ; it almost puts her on her guard against being better."

"Oh, please don't take me up so sharply. Try to forget there ever was a time before the last few days—that is, afterward. First, I want to say to you that—that I love you,—and have always loved you ; and then—I want to ask you to forget that I was such a fool as not to know it that day,—the day I first met you. Can't you forget it, Ellen?"

"I didn't notice that you showed any antipathy for me when we first met," returned Miss Hancock, coloring but self-possessed.

"Antipathy? No, of course not. But I was pretty well cut up. I wasn't clear-headed enough to see how brave and true you were—and it was so unusual—and the public place."

"The public place?"

"Well, the Common isn't quite private."

"The Common, Mr. Emory?"

"Why, yes, the Common. Was it not right at the foot of the Common steps that you met me? It was just three weeks ago yesterday, was it not?"

"But—my good Mr. Emory—I don't understand—at all. How could I have met

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you three weeks ago, when we were only off the *Fusiyama* ten days ago?"

Emory said to himself that if she wanted to keep up this little fiction it was certainly a harmless deceit, since she must know that he was not deceived by it; and at all events, it was a delicate way of settling the subject forever.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I was mistaken in speaking; and anyway it is of no importance. I have met you, which is the main thing—and,"—he took Miss Hancock's hand and gently drew her out into the gathering twilight on the piazza.

Emory went down one morning, a couple of months later, to meet his cousin, the literary Bromfield of the family, who had just landed. As the brougham rolled up Beacon Street, the two men having got through the preliminary inquiries about their mutual welfare, Emory leaned forward and pointed out a narrow brown stone house.

"Mrs. Hunnewell took the Baker's house this season," he said, "and I had better tell you now that my engagement to her sister was announced last week. I should have written before, only Miss Hancock was a bit

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particular about having it kept to ourselves."

"Man alive! You engaged to Miss Hancock! My dear fellow, my congratulations,—my warmest! You needn't tell me anything about Miss Hancock. I knew her in Paris,—saw a great deal of her in Paris just before she sailed."

"So she said."

"She took an earlier steamer if I remember, in order to get here for a house party, or something of the sort,—the *Fusiyama*, if I remember."

Emory recalled the careful deception which Miss Hancock even now kept up about her arrival on the *Fusiyama*.

"Was it the *Fusiyama*?" he replied discreetly.

"Yes,—and upon my soul, I seem to have had a sort of premonition about this. Speaking of her sailing reminds me of it. To show you how delighted I am, let me tell you that I've actually thought of how well suited you are to each other. I remember sitting in my room one night about ten days before she left Paris. I'd been seeing her party pretty steadily, and I wondered if you'd meet her over here, and whether perhaps you would n't

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—well, I can't say marry—I didn't really think you'd make the effort to propose. By Jove, I believe I 'held you in the thought' of this, as they say. It all comes back to me. I held a regular imaginary conversation between you and Miss Hancock. I reversed things, though, and had her propose to you at the end of a six month's acquaintance. I needn't have troubled myself, I see,—you didn't wait six months. Upon my word, I didn't think you had the 'go in and win' in you. The truth is, I gloated over the shock it would give you to be made love to by a woman—if anything could rouse you, I said to myself, that would."

"Did you, indeed?" said Bromfield dryly. "Isn't it a pity that this was only in your imagination? I suppose—"

Emory stopped, struck by a sudden suggestion.

"You suppose," went on the elder man, "that you've missed a sensation. I shouldn't wonder. I made the proposal picturesque, anyhow. I had you walking across the Common." Emory said nothing; but that night, as the literary Bromfield was shaving, his cousin appeared in his dressing-room.